

**DOLLARS AGAINST DEMOCRACY: DOMESTIC
TERRORIST FINANCING IN THE
AFTERMATH OF INSURRECTION**

VIRTUAL HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY,
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
AND MONETARY POLICY
OF THE
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U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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DOLLARS AGAINST DEMOCRACY: DOMESTIC TERRORIST FINANCING IN THE AFTERMATH OF INSURRECTION

Thursday, February 25, 2021

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY,
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
AND MONETARY POLICY,
COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES,
Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:02 a.m., via Webex, Hon. Jim A. Himes [chairman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Members present: Representatives Himes, Gottheimer, San Nicolas, Torres, Lynch, Dean, Ocasio-Cortez, Garcia of Illinois, Auchincloss; Hill, Zeldin, Williams of Texas, Emmer, Davidson, Gonzalez of Ohio, and Taylor.

Ex officio present: Representative Waters.

Chairman HIMES. The Subcommittee on National Security, International Development and Monetary Policy will come to order. Without objection, the Chair is authorized to declare a recess of the subcommittee at any time. Also, without objection, members of the full Financial Services Committee who are not members of this subcommittee are authorized to participate in today's hearing.

As a reminder, I ask all Members to keep themselves muted when they are not being recognized by the Chair. This will minimize disturbances while Members are asking questions of our witnesses. The staff has been instructed not to mute Members, except when a Member is not being recognized by the Chair and there is inadvertent background noise.

Members are also reminded that they may only participate in one remote proceeding at a time. If you are participating today, please keep your camera on. And if you choose to attend a different remote proceeding, please turn your camera off.

If Members wish to be recognized during the hearing, please identify yourself by name to facilitate recognition by the Chair.

Today's hearing is entitled, "Dollars Against Democracy: Domestic Terrorist Financing in the Aftermath of Insurrection."

I now recognize myself for 4 minutes to give an opening statement.

As we heard from Merrick Garland during his confirmation hearing earlier this week, the country faces a, "more dangerous period in the wake of January 6th than we did after the Oklahoma City

bombing, the single deadliest act of domestic terrorism in American history.⁵ This threat is real and it is, therefore, incumbent on all of us on this subcommittee to look at the ways that these extremist groups fund not only their violent activities, but their recruitment and radicalization efforts as well.

In the wake of the attacks of September 11th, we recast the entire Federal Government, and worked feverishly to defund terrorist extremes. To effectively disrupt domestic extremist groups, we need to better understand their financing.

In today's hearing, I want us to focus on three important areas.

First, to better understand how these groups are raising money. Unlike ISIS, for example, these organizations are not pyramid-shaped, where funding comes from a handful of easily disruptible areas. An online fundraising drive for a legitimate charity, and one that helps support an extremist group, can look very similar. Some extremist groups are eschewing the traditional banking sector in favor of cryptocurrency, thereby avoiding our traditional methods of disrupting extremist financing.

Second, to give serious thought to where our efforts on disruption are best spent. Terrorist attacks rely on their asymmetrical nature to be effective. Many of the domestic terrorist attacks in recent memory have been self-funded. The bomb constructed by Timothy McVeigh cost less than \$5,000. However, recruitment and radicalization efforts are often more resourced and time-intensive. Targeting these efforts may provide an avenue for preventing future attacks.

Third, we need to be conscientiously mindful of the civil liberties concerns at play here. Unlike international extremist groups, law enforcement is constrained by the Constitution when dealing with domestic extremists. Balancing the desire to give law enforcement the tools necessary to disrupt these groups, with the need to respect the rights of all Americans in the Constitution to which we have all pledged an oath, is essential.

I will quickly note, in the spirit of my opening statement and the subcommittee's first hearing, that this hearing is not about, "what-aboutism" or "both-sidesism." The topic is domestic terrorism, and it must be divorced from any specific ideology.

While we all lived through a brutal event on January 6th undertaken by right-wing extremists, no location on the political spectrum has a monopoly on extremism or violence. Focusing on one group to score political points doesn't do anything to help us solve the very real problem at hand, a problem that could get worse over time, as January 6th demonstrated to so many groups that they could, in fact, make the news and be effective in their dark ways.

Finally, I would like to thank our panel of witnesses whose expertise and experience in their respective fields is unparalleled. I sincerely appreciate your assistance in tackling this difficult issue.

The Chair now recognizes the ranking member of the subcommittee, Mr. Hill, for 5 minutes for an opening statement.

Mr. HILL. I thank the chairman, and I appreciate you holding this hearing, and for your opening statement, and I appreciate the witnesses lending their expertise today.

I know this is a topic that touches all members on this subcommittee and across the Capitol, for the events that transpired on

January 6th affected all of us deeply. While we have discussed domestic terrorism financing in the past, this hearing will hit closer to home than the previous ones.

I look forward to the constructive dialogue on this topic as a way to bring both sides of the aisle closer together. The Majority has made the decision to convene this hearing in the aftermath of the horrific destruction and mayhem of January 6th. All of us are saddened and outraged by the actions of those involved in that evil and devastating act. All of us condemn the rioters' destruction and malice towards the peaceful conduct of the business of democracy here in the people's House.

But I would be remiss if I didn't note that extremist events like this have been caused by both the far left and the far right all across our country. Even this week, in Senate testimony, we are learning important details about the premeditation of the attack and the weakness in the Capitol security planning and preparation.

To honor the rank and file men and women of law enforcement, I have sponsored a resolution with my good friend, Representative Ed Perlmutter, to celebrate the bravery of the Capitol Police, the D.C. Metropolitan Police, and other law enforcement officers. These men and women protected us with courage, and they should not be overlooked. I am pleased to report that this resolution has strong bipartisan support, with over 133 co-sponsors.

It is important to note, though, that this is not the first time that our Nation's Capitol and elected officials have been targeted. I will spare the committee a long history lesson, but I will mention that prior to the events of January 6th, there have been 6 other attacks on the Capitol involving extremists, ranging from White supremacists to anarchists. Most in this room will remember the members of this committee and our colleagues who were attacked during the Congressional baseball game practice in 2017, committed by a terrorist fueled by rage against Republicans.

Unfortunately, as the chairman said, extremism, on both the radical left and radical right in our country, is not new, and it affects all Americans. It is important that we investigate the funding for such attacks and mitigate extremists' ability to access it. Cutting off funding will inhibit their ability to grow and expand their abilities and scope.

We need to craft bipartisan solutions to ensure that the violence and hatred that fuel the attacks does not happen again. We must use our existing extensive laws and law enforcement operation and cooperation to identify and prosecute those on the left and right who attempt to use terror and violence.

I appreciate the chairman, and in a final comment, I would hope—I see our distinguished Full Committee Chair on the call—I would urge our Chair, when we are in Washington to—I would invite her consideration of an in-person hearing.

And with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

Chairman HIMES. The Chair thanks the ranking member for his statement, and now recognizes the Chair of the Full Committee, the gentlewoman from California, Chairwoman Maxine Waters, for 1 minute.

Chairwoman WATERS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I think this is extraordinarily important. I thank you for holding this hearing.

We are here against the backdrop of the January 6th insurrection, a deplorable, yet predictable, display of White supremacists such as the Proud Boys, the Oath Keepers, QAnon, and others, and nationalist violence incited by President Trump against the members of this body and against democracy itself.

Unfortunately, the violence that we saw on the 6th is not new, but arises from our nation's legacy of violence towards people of color, religious minorities, LGBTQ persons, women, and immigrants; from the KKK and lynching, to the terror in Charlottesville, Pittsburgh, El Paso, and Escondido, White supremacists and nationalism are not new threats.

But there is hope. The radicalization, recruitment, training, and operations that made January 6th possible also had a money trail, which can and must be targeted to turn the tide against future attacks.

Thank you. And I yield back the balance of my time.

Chairman HIMES. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

We now welcome the testimony of our distinguished witnesses, and we have five witnesses today. First, Ms. Iman Boukadoum, who is a Senior Program Manager at The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights; second, Ms. Lecia Brooks, who is Chief of Staff at the Southern Poverty Law Center; third, Mr. Daniel Glaser, who is Global Head of Jurisdictional Services and head of the Washington, D.C., office of K2 Integrity, a Senior Advisor at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, and a former Assistant Secretary for Terrorist Financing and Financial Crimes at the U.S. Department of the Treasury; fourth, Dr. Daniel Rogers, who is co-founder and chief technology officer of the Global Disinformation Index; and fifth, Dr. Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, who is chief executive officer at Valens Global.

Witnesses are reminded that your oral testimony will be limited to 5 minutes. You should be able to see a timer on your screen that will indicate how much time you have left, and a chime will go off at the end of your time. I would ask that you be mindful of the timer, and quickly wrap up your testimony if you hear the chime, so that we can be respectful of both the witnesses' and the committee members' time.

And without objection, your written statements will be made a part of the record.

Ms. Boukadoum, you are now recognized for 5 minutes to give an oral presentation of your testimony.

**STATEMENT OF IMAN BOUKADOUM, SENIOR MANAGER,
FIGHTING HATE AND BIAS, THE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE
ON CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

Ms. BOUKADOUM. Chairman Himes, Ranking Member Hill, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for holding this timely hearing today.

Last month's violent insurrection, heavily fueled by White supremacy and White nationalism, shocked the world, but it didn't shock me. It didn't shock my community or other marginalized

communities, because we are not new to White nationalist violence. Personally, as a Muslim and an Algerian American, I appreciate the opportunity to be heard today as we wrestle with the aftermath of this horrific day.

We echo the sense of urgency shared by many of you today in Congress regarding the very real threat of White nationalist violence, and I would just note that our coalition has been ringing the alarm relating to White nationalist violence for generations.

We know, however, that even well-intentioned national security laws are invariably weaponized against Black, Brown, and Muslim communities, and that White nationalist violence is not prioritized, making that policy failure the fundamental reason for what transpired on January 6th, not a lack of legal authority.

For this reason, we oppose any legislation that would create new charges for domestic terrorism or any enhanced or additional criminal penalties. The Federal Government, including the Treasury Department, has many tools at its disposal to investigate. And also, the FBI and DOJ have 50 terrorism-related statutes and over a dozen criminal statutes that they can use. They just need to use them to target White nationalist violence.

And, of course, we know that White nationalist violence and violence inspired by Muslims or ISIS and al-Qaida-inspired violence is very differently treated in this country. Global policing of charitable giving by Muslims, for example, in my community, which is a core part of my faith, has led to the effective forfeiting of our First Amendment rights.

The failure to prioritize White nationalist crimes and the over-policing of innocuous financial transactions by mosques or those originating from the Middle East or people with Middle Eastern names, has taken attention away from the clear and present threat of White nationalist violence percolating all around us, and countless innocent people, particularly in the Muslim community, as I said, have effectively lost their right to perform religious duties for decades.

What is clear is that the Treasury Department and other Federal law enforcement agencies already have vast administrative and statutory authorities at their disposal which they routinely use to disrupt financing relating to clandestine activity by freezing bank accounts and stopping those transactions.

And what history demonstrates is that providing additional national security authority to fight domestic terrorism would devastate already over-policed and over-surveilled communities of color and Muslims.

I would like to sum up with a few recommendations.

First, the Jabara-Heyer NO HATE Act is an important piece of legislation that must be passed. It centers communities, and it would help with information-sharing relating to hate crimes, and would allow the Treasury Department to trace financial ties to White nationalist violence.

Second, the the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act (DTPA) is a piece of legislation that we have endorsed and we believe will also help with information-sharing, including with the Treasury Department, to enhance clamping down on White nationalist violence.

And, third, we believe that hate crimes data must be reported and mandated for public consumption and that government leaders must be able to see what is happening across our country within the hate crime space.

I will just conclude by saying that history has taught us that national security laws invariably harm the very communities they are supposed to protect. From COINTELPRO, the FBI's unlawful domestic surveillance operation that the church committee demonstrated in Congress, was shamefully used against Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and other civil rights leaders in the 1960s; and it, too, was justified as a national security program.

And now, after 9/11, we have seen similar frameworks used to unjustly target and harm Arabs, Muslims, and others, treating us and our religion as suspicious, and compromising our First Amendment rights, freedoms, and due process rights.

Adding national security authorities will only exacerbate these challenges.

Thank you. And I am happy to answer any questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Boukadoum can be found on page 36 of the appendix.]

Chairman HIMES. Thank you, Ms. Boukadoum.

Ms. Brooks, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF LECIA BROOKS, CHIEF OF STAFF, SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

Ms. BROOKS. Good morning, Chairman Himes, Chairwoman Waters, Ranking Member Hill, and members of the subcommittee. My name is Lecia Brooks, and I serve as the chief of staff for the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC).

For 50 years, SPLC has been a catalyst for racial justice in the South and beyond. We work in partnership with communities to dismantle White supremacy, strengthen intersectional movements, and advance the human rights of all people. The SPLC began tracking White supremacist activity in the 1980s. Each year, since 1990, we have conducted a census of hate groups operating across the U.S. as part of our annual Year in Hate Extremism report. Our 2020 report, released this month, documented a decline in the number of hate groups, but not a decline in the strength and momentum of their movement.

As the January 6th Capitol Hill siege affirmed, their threat to our democracy has not diminished. Far-right extremists are exploiting internet technology to create a broader, more decentralized, and more dangerous movement. The proliferation of numerous internet platforms has allowed individuals to engage with potentially violent movements, like QAnon and Boogaloo, without being card-carrying members of a particular group.

Our testimony outlines how this movement finances itself in the decentralized way in which they now operate. The funding and financing of hate groups in this decentralized landscape is also changing in important ways. In the past, hate groups raised money by charging dues, selling products, or requiring the purchase of uniforms. Today, some White nationalist groups and personalities are raising funds through the distribution of propaganda itself.

In November, SPLC researchers reported that dozens of extremist groups were earning thousands of dollars per month on a popular live-streaming platform called DLive. As the post-election period became dominated by former President Trump's false assertions that the election was fraudulent, these DLive streamers shifted to video streaming at in-person events branded with the slogan, "Stop the Steal." Some of these same individuals were featured by House impeachment managers as key perpetrators of the violence on January 6th. You see, they had used DLive to live-stream the events inside the Capitol and on the grounds.

Crowdfunding is also being exploited by hate groups to earn money in this new decentralized landscape. Crowdfunding sites played a critical role in the Capitol insurrection, providing monetary support that allowed people to travel to Washington, D.C. They have also played a crucial role in raising hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees for extremists.

The violent insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on January 6th should serve as a wake-up call for Congress, the Biden Administration, internet companies, law enforcement, and public officials at every level. But we had wake-up calls before, many of them, in fact: Charleston, in 2015; Charlottesville, in 2017; and Christchurch, New Zealand, and El Paso, in 2019.

As we all saw last month, we can no longer afford inaction. Some technology companies have taken steps in the right direction to combat the rise of hate and extremism on these platforms, but both government and internet companies must do far more.

Let me close by highlighting five policy recommendations we included in our testimony:

One, tech companies must create and enforce terms of service to ensure that they do not become platforms for hate. They should prevent their sites from being used by extremist organizations to raise money for their illegal actions.

Two, these companies should commit to much more transparency and regular outside audits to measure financial harms caused by their platforms.

Three, Congress should prioritize the funding of programs for research into technologies that can be used to detect and prevent online financial harms while preserving human rights.

Four, Congress should reject legislation to create a new Federal criminal domestic terrorism statute. If passed as prologue, such a statute could be used to expand racial profiling, or even be wielded to surveil and investigate communities of color and political opponents in the name of national security.

Finally, we should make concerted efforts across the government to improve Federal hate crime data collection, training, and prevention. Data drives policy. We cannot address hate violence unless we measure it properly.

Thank you for holding this important hearing. The SPLC looks forward to working with you as you continue to focus your urgent attention on this important issue.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Brooks can be found on page 42 of the appendix.]

Chairman HIMES. Thank you, Ms. Brooks.

Mr. Glaser, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF DANIEL L. GLASER, GLOBAL HEAD, JURISDICTIONAL SERVICES, AND HEAD OF WASHINGTON, DC OFFICE, K2 INTEGRITY; SENIOR ADVISOR AT THE FOUNDATION FOR DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACIES; AND FORMER ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR TERRORIST FINANCING AND FINANCIAL CRIMES, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Mr. GLASER. Thank you, Chairman Himes, Ranking Member Hill, and distinguished members of the subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to talk about how the U.S. Government can employ similar tools and strategies against White nationalist and other domestic terrorist groups as it has employed against global jihadist groups over the past 2 decades.

This is a personal issue for me. During my time at the Treasury Department, I fought to cut off funding to terrorist groups such as al-Qaida, the Islamic State, and Hezbollah. As a Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bush Administration, and eventually as the Assistant Secretary for Terrorist Financing in the Obama Administration, my primary responsibility was to lead the design and implementation of strategies, to attack the financial networks of these groups, and other threats to our country's national security. And while we should never let down our guard with respect to those still-potent terrorist organizations, it has become tragically clear that there are domestic extremist groups that, in some ways, present an even greater threat to our ideals and our democracy. We have the responsibility to target those groups with the same determination, creativity, and sense of purpose that we displayed in the years following 9/11.

To be sure, counter-illicit finance strategies are not silver bullets, and there are practical and constitutional limitations to domestic action that do not arise in the global context. But any comprehensive response to a national security threat must include a strategic financial component. It is my hope and expectation that the new leadership at the Treasury Department will turn its attention to precisely that challenge.

From the outset, let's be clear, that the purpose of a counter-illicit finance strategy is not to replace the traditional law enforcement tools which will remain the foundation of any domestic effort.

Supplementing those efforts, a counter-illicit finance strategy should seek to hinder the ability of extremist groups to use the financial system to mask their identities and to raise and move funds. The first step must be to understand the typologies and methods by which such groups raise and move funds and to map out their financial networks.

This first step should be followed by two general categories of actions: first, offense, undermining the financial networks that support these groups; and second, defense, taking systemic action within the financial system to make it less vulnerable to abuse by these groups.

It is sometimes stated that extremist groups are less vulnerable to financial measures because of their informal and decentralized structure. I believe that this is a hypothesis that is yet to be tested. Any group that engages in organized activity needs to raise and

move funds, and when those activities extend nationwide or globally, it only increases such groups' reliance on the financial system.

The U.S. Government should undertake a comprehensive effort to understand how these extremist groups are accessing the financial system and, to the extent possible, to map their financial networks. Once the financial networks and activities of the extremist groups are better understood, the U.S. Government should consider the application of targeted financial measures. The U.S. currently has all the authority it needs to apply targeted financial sanctions against foreign extremist groups, and it began to do so last spring with the designation of the Russian Imperial Movement.

Unfortunately, the U.S. has yet to target additional foreign groups. And in contrast to previous campaigns against jihadist groups, Treasury has not followed up the initial Russian Imperial Movement designation with a financial pressure campaign involving waves of sanctions seeking to dismantle facilitation networks. I encourage the U.S. Government to pursue such campaign as a priority matter.

Practical and constitutional constraints give the U.S. Government far less ability to apply targeted financial measures against domestic groups. Congress should consider legislation allowing for sanctions like authorities to protect the U.S. financial system from abuse by domestic extremist groups. Such authorities will need to be tailored to ensure that the government complies with constitutional requirements, including First Amendment restrictions on how groups are targeted and due process restrictions on how such measures are applied. One consideration could be to forego the asset freeze that is usually associated with sanctions in favor of some more limited measures.

There are also measures that the U.S. Government can take today to make the U.S. financial system less vulnerable to abuse by extremist groups. The United States has a robust anti-money-laundering and countering the financing of terrorism regime, but it can always be fine-tuned and adjusted to address new vulnerabilities, including those presented by domestic extremist groups.

The potential measures in Treasury's toolbox include: the issuance of guidance to financial institutions on financial typologies, methodologies, and red flags; the establishment of private-public partnerships; the use of information-sharing authorities; and the use of geographic targeting orders.

Taken together, these measures will strengthen the ability of financial institutions to identify, report, and impede the financial activity of domestic extremist groups, and will ensure that the U.S. financial system is a hostile environment for these groups.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Glaser can be found on page 97 of the appendix.]

Chairman HIMES. Thank you, Mr. Glaser.

Dr. Rogers, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF DANIEL ROGERS, CO-FOUNDER AND CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER, GLOBAL DISINFORMATION INDEX

Mr. ROGERS. Chairman Himes, Ranking Member Hill, Chairwoman Waters, and members of the subcommittee, good morning, and thank for the opportunity to speak before you and discuss the funding mechanisms of these domestic violent extremist groups.

I am the co-founder and chief technology officer of the Global Disinformation Index (GDI), a nonprofit focused on catalyzing change in the technology industry to disrupt online disinformation.

Last fall, my colleague, Ben Decker, and our team at the GDI collaborated with the Institute for Strategic Dialogue to conduct a study entitled, “Bankrolling Bigotry”, to examine the funding mechanisms of American hate groups.

Many of the groups implicated in the events of January 6th are the same ones that we examined last year in our study. This is why I sit before you today to discuss a little bit about what we learned about how technology and payments companies enable groups like those that participated in the insurrection to operate.

These groups leverage the internet as a primary means of disseminating their toxic ideologies and soliciting of funds. One only needs to search Amazon or Etsy for the term, “QAnon”, to uncover shirts, hats, mugs, books, and other paraphernalia that both monetize and further popularize the domestic violent extremist threat. Images from that fateful day last month are rife with sweatshirts that say, “Camp Auschwitz”, that, until recently, were for sale on websites like Teespring and CafePress.

As we speak, at least 24 individuals indicted for their role in the January 6th insurrection, including 8 members of the Proud Boys, have used crowdfunding site GiveSendGo to raise nearly a quarter of a million dollars in donations. And it is not just about the money. This merchandise acts as sort of like a team jersey that helps these groups recruit new members and foment further hatred towards their targets.

We analyzed the digital footprints of 73 groups across 60 websites, and 225 social media accounts and their use of 54 different online fundraising mechanisms, including 47 payment platforms in 5 different cryptocurrencies, ultimately finding 191 incidences of hate groups using online fundraising services to support their activities.

The funding mechanism included both primary platforms like Amazon, intermediary platforms such as Stripe or Shopify, crowdfunding sites like GoFundMe, payment facilitators like PayPal, monetized content streaming services such as YouTube Super Chats, and cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin.

All of these payment mechanisms were linked to websites or social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Telegram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Gab, BitChute, and others. The sheer number of companies I just mentioned is the first clue to the scale and the scope of the problem. This is not an issue of any one individual company, but, rather, a systemic problem of hate and bigotry exploiting an entire industry, and even government policy, to raise funds, peddle extremist ideologies, and commit acts of violence.

A number of conclusions stood out to us in performing this work. For starters, over half of the platforms we identified already have

explicit policies against hate and extremism that are simply not enforced. We also found that a large fraction of the groups we studied have approved tax-exempt status with the IRS. A full 100 percent of anti-Muslim groups, 75 percent of anti-immigrant groups, and 70 percent of anti-LGBTQ groups have 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(4) status.

Over 1/3 of the militia groups that we identified, including the Oath Keepers, whose leadership was recently indicted on charges related to January 6th, have tax-exempt status.

This status gives them access to a whole spectrum of charity fundraising tools from Facebook donations to Amazon Smile to the point where the most common fundraising platform we identified across all of our data was Charity Navigator. These platforms are reticent, to say the least, to make unilateral decisions that go against IRS determination.

The problem of hate groups exploiting the Tax Code goes back decades, and stems from a combination of a lack of resources at the IRS to properly enforce compliance, as well as long-standing efforts by some to exploit the charity rules for political, and, now, extremist purposes.

But the issue has become more urgent in the wake of January 6th. In the days leading up to the insurrection, the Oath Keepers' founder, Stewart Rhodes, appeared on a podcast and solicited charitable donations to the Oath Keepers Educational Foundation. It can only be presumed that these funds, which listeners were notably able to deduct from their Federal taxes, went to transporting and lodging members of the group slated to participate in the ensuing riots.

Private industry must also step up and do more. Since the publication of our report last October, we have documented at least 17 actions taken by platforms against the groups we have enumerated. For example, four of the six payment mechanisms routing funds to the Oath Keepers have been blocked. Amazon has even removed them from Amazon Smile. But 17 actions out of 200 instances we observed speaks to the rampant way that it has been allowed to persist. In fact, while most platforms have removed the Oath Keepers, payment facilitator RallyPay still, to this day, services the group's fundraising needs, and has shown no signs of responding to public pressure to stop.

More must be done. Industry-wide standards must be set, and enforcement across both the private and public sector must be stepped up.

Chairman Himes, Ranking Member Hill, Chairwoman Waters, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for your time, and I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Rogers can be found on page 102 of the appendix.]

Chairman HIMES. Thank you, Dr. Rogers.

Dr. Gartenstein-Ross, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF DAVEED GARTENSTEIN-ROSS, CEO,
VALENS GLOBAL**

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. Domestic violent extremism is today uniquely posed for growth. Opportunities are given by our information environment by seemingly intractable global problems that

governments appear incapable of addressing, by a nation riven by its differences, and by an age where ethics and identity are in constant flux.

Chairman Himes, Ranking Member Hill, Chairwoman Waters, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, on behalf of Valens Global, it is an honor to appear before you today. I think it is obvious how the backdrop I describe represents an attractive recruiting environment for any extremist group.

This panel's consensus is that White supremacist extremism, or WSE, is the most pressing present threat. This is not just the panelists' opinions. Multiple U.S. Government assessments validate this view, as do relevant statistics, but White supremacist extremism is not the only concern in the domestic-violent extremist, or DVE space.

In addition to documenting relevant WSE threat actors, my written testimony details street violence, assaults, arson, and intimidation employed by another militant stream. There has been a general rise in extremism.

The opening remarks of the chairman and the ranking member rightly emphasized that we are living through a dynamic multifaceted ecosystem of extremism. Our divisions could plunge the U.S. into serious conflict, or even fragmentation.

Scholars have discussed reciprocal radicalization, where opposite extremes strengthen both sides and give average people a reason to drift toward extremes. Reciprocal radicalization shows that the power and success of groups aligned with one extremist ideology fuels ostensibly opposing groups. Though different forms of extremism can thrive off one another, society suffers.

Our policies must be appropriate to this environment. Any policies to combat DVE should be narrowly targeted and rights-protected. Unfairly targeting only one ideology, or seeking to criminalize constitutionally protected behaviors, may push the country into deepening conflict. So, what can be done?

First, the U.S. Government should consider designating additional WSE groups as terrorist organizations. I single out WSE groups here because of the level of transnationalism in the movement, which is a prerequisite for designation under current law. The State Department's designation last year of the Russian Imperial Movement was significant, and it is worth considering further designations of violent groups that satisfy the criteria.

Second, any current discussion of DVE financing will touch about a domestic designation statute allowing designation of purely domestic groups. This is the most direct way of addressing DVE groups' financing, potentially criminalizing the act of funding them and letting authorities clamp down on their assets. Yet, such a statute would be fraught with civil liberties concerns. Any such statute must be viewpoint-neutral with designations corresponding to the threat groups posed, not to the ideas that they espouse. The statute must be clear about predicate acts that could result in designation, and that threshold for designation should be relatively high.

Third, [inaudible] more rigorously mapped relevant DVE groups and their finances. The current consensus among DVE experts is that these groups are relatively fluid and devoid of organizational

hierarchy. This may be so, but there is a tendency for experts to see groups as disorganized or non-hierarchical, when they have a hidden structure, something to which Mr. Glaser's testimony alluded. Our current understanding of DVE group structure and funds may be incomplete, and in the digital age, fluid structures can quickly morph into more concrete ones. Further research may present further policy options.

Finally, the U.S. Government should devote resources to better understanding reciprocal radicalization and related phenomenon, fringe fluidity, the transition of an individual or group from one extremist ideological stream to another. Better understanding of these dynamics would afford us a better understanding of how violent extremists interact with each other.

In conclusion, this hearing refers to the events of January 6th as an insurrection. Anybody who has been in an insurgency or a civil war situation knows that it is essential to reduce the potential pool from which militant factions can draw. Everyone who is a part of this hearing—Members of Congress, experts, media, spectators—should understand that we are all a part of this story. Our work is not to score partisan points, but to make this democracy more resilient to the challenges it confronts.

With the divisions we have, with today's unprecedented ability to mobilize for good or ill, we need to reduce the number of people who might try to impose their will on the rest of us by force.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Gartenstein-Ross can be found on page 58 of the appendix.]

Chairman HIMES. Thank you, Dr. Gartenstein-Ross.

We now come to the member question portion of the hearing. I thank all of the witnesses for that comprehensive testimony, and now recognize myself for 5 minutes for questions.

One thing that struck me is that we heard from five excellent witnesses, and I don't believe I heard the word, "cybercurrency" once. It comes up a lot with my constituents. It comes up a lot in different contexts. So just to keep some organization, let me ask two of the witnesses to just offer a brief perspective on how the committee should think about cybercurrency as an anonymous and potentially untraceable source of financing.

Let me start with Ms. Brooks. Any thoughts?

Ms. BROOKS. I invite my colleague, Dr. Rogers, to take the first shot at that.

Mr. ROGERS. Okay. Thank you. Thanks, Congressman. That is a very interesting question, and one that was included in our study. We looked at five different cryptocurrencies and their involvement in transferring funds to these groups. They are definitely there. They are definitely part of the fundraising strategies. What we noticed was that there was a strong correlation with the kind of explicit extremism of the group and their use of cryptocurrencies. So, maybe less extreme groups, or more cryptically extreme groups, for lack of a better word, had a more dominant use of traditional fundraising platforms that touched the kind of mainstream financial system. And what would happen is as they were deplatformed off of those tools, those sites, they would migrate into the use of increasingly anonymized cryptocurrencies.

I should also point out that cryptocurrencies, I like to call them pseudonymous, not necessarily anonymous, and there are efforts and ways to track transactions, the challenge being attributing, say, a particular cryptocurrency wallet to a particular actor, but we definitely saw the use of cryptocurrencies generally behind the most extreme groups that we studied.

Chairman HIMES. Thank you, Dr. Rogers.

I do have one other question, if any of the other witnesses have a different or additional perspective on cryptocurrencies, let me just invite anyone who wants to chime in.

Mr. GLASER. If I could chime in, Mr. Chairman?

Chairman HIMES. Yes, please.

Mr. GLASER. This is Danny Glaser talking.

With respect to cryptocurrencies, I think it is important to remember that if you want to be able to use a cryptocurrency in the real economy to any scale, at some point, it does need to be converted into actual currency, into dollars. That is the place where the Treasury Department does regulate cryptocurrencies, and cryptocurrency exchanges are regarded as money services businesses. They have full customer due diligence requirements. They have full money-laundering program requirements. They have reporting requirements.

The U.S. Treasury Department, just last month, issued a proposed rule relating to unhosted wallets of cryptocurrencies, and that is out for notice and comment right now. It addresses the particular issue of wallets that are not hosted on a particular exchange. I think it is an important rule that is out there, and I do encourage people to take a look at it. The comment period closes in May, and then, hopefully, Treasury will be able to take regulatory action to close that particular vulnerability.

Chairman HIMES. Thank you, Mr. Glaser.

I actually have an additional question for you, and I don't have a lot of time. One of the things that struck me about the testimony is that there weren't really calls for additional laws. In fact, two of our witnesses urged us to avoid that.

Mr. Glaser, you, though, suggested something new that I would like to give you, maybe, the 42 seconds I have left to elaborate on. You said you were hopeful for sanctions like authorities against domestic actors. You did not to constitutional and civil liberties concerns, but give us another 30 seconds on exactly what you mean and, perhaps, most importantly, what sort of Fourth Amendment overlay should accompany such authority?

Mr. GLASER. Thank you for the question.

The fact is that the Treasury Department really does not have a lot of authority to go after purely domestic groups in the way that it goes after global terrorist organizations. It simply doesn't have that authority.

You could imagine an authority that does allow for the designation of domestic organizations. It would have to take into account, certainly, constitutional restrictions. When you read a lot of the court decisions, there are concerns relating to notice. Those concerns could be addressed in a statute. There are concerns that a lot of the scrutiny is heightened because sanctions are usually accompanied with asset freezes. But you could imagine sanctions that

don't involve asset freezes that involve—transaction bans that involve regulatory type of requirements that you see in Section 311 of the PATRIOT Act.

So, there is a variety of ways that the due process standards could be raised from what we see in the global context and the—

Chairman HIMES. Thank you, Mr. Glaser. I hate to cut you off, but I have to be a little disciplined on time. I am very interested in that, so let me encourage you, if you want to submit additional testimony, to do so.

And before I recognize the ranking member, it was startling—not startling, it was interesting to me that there were apparently no strong dissenting views on the concept of additional legislation. So if the witnesses have additional thoughts on that, the chairman would certainly welcome that in written form.

And with that, the Chair now recognizes the distinguished ranking member for 5 minutes for questions.

Mr. HILL. Thanks, Chairman Himes. This has been an excellent panel, with really superb presentations, and it has been very informative.

In looking at the draft legislation that the Majority noticed with this hearing, one bill stuck out to me, and I think it is a good follow-up from your most recent exchange. It seeks to amend Title 31 to require the Secretary of the Treasury to establish a program to allow designated employees of financial institutions to access classified information related to terrorism, sedition, and insurrection.

Now, over the past three Congresses, we have talked about the concept of a fusion center, not unlike we do in monitoring cyber risk and cyber crimes, for this terror finance arena. We have never been able to come ashore on it legislatively, so I found that interesting; however, I am concerned when you deputize bank employees without any oversight as to how the information would be protected, or if there is really even a need for that, so I would like some comments.

Dr. Gartenstein-Ross, could you describe how banks share information with law enforcement today, and then provide feedback on how we might change these protocols, or if that protocol change is necessary?

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. Thank you, Ranking Member Hill.

There are four primary ways that banks share information now. The first is suspicious activity reports (SARs). Financial institutions have to file these documents with the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) when there is a suspected case of money laundering or fraud. The SAR is designed to monitor activity in finance-related industries that are out of the ordinary, or a precursor to illegal activity, or could threaten public safety.

Second, there is law enforcement's Section 314(a) power under the PATRIOT Act, in which it obtains potential lead information from financial institutions via FinCEN.

Third, law enforcement can use its subpoena power if a court issues a subpoena pursuant to an investigation, or to an administrative proceeding.

And, fourth, where there are blocked assets, pursuant to the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) authorities, sanctions, or otherwise, banks are required to report blocked assets back to OFAC.

The information-sharing, in my view, is currently quite effective. Treasury, in particular, has a very strong relationship with the U.S. financial institutions.

Mr. HILL. Thank you. And we made one tweak that was passed into law, signed into law last year, a bill of mine, called the Cooperate with Law Enforcement Agencies and Watch (CLAW) Act, which encouraged cooperation on accounts kept open so that they could be pursued by law enforcement investigations. And I appreciated the bipartisan support for that.

On Section 314 in the PATRIOT Act, is that a place where we could, in a protected, appropriate way, make a change that relates to this domestic issue, or is that, in your view, too challenging?

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. No. I think it is a place where you could definitely make a change. The 314(a) process allows an investigator to canvas financial institutions for potential lead information that might otherwise never be uncovered. It is designed to allow disparate pieces of information to be identified, centralized, and evaluated.

When law enforcement submits a request to FinCEN to get information from financial institutions, it has to submit a written certification that each individual or entity about which the information is sought is engaged in or reasonably suspected of engaging in terrorist activity or money laundering.

I think that in some cases, 314(a) may already be usable, but I think it is worth looking at the 314(a) process to see if, in this particular context, when you are looking at domestic violent extremism, as opposed to foreign terrorist organizations, there are some tweaks that would provide the ability to get leads in this matter.

Mr. HILL. Yes, I share all of the chairman's concerns about this, but I would invite you to write to the committee with more details about how one might make a regulatory or procedural change there at Treasury on that topic.

Let me switch subjects. You made a very interesting point in your comment about mapping these extremist groups' organizational capability. Can you expand on the mapping part? We have about 30 seconds, and I will turn it to—

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. Yes, sir. Basically, right now—and you heard several witnesses say this, and I am not disputing this—the view of these groups is that they tend to be rather hierarchy-less. They are not very vertical in structure. And what I have noticed in the realm of extremist groups is sometimes there are hidden structures that we experts are slow to recognize. I know that one of the proposed bills on the GAO would look in more detail into the assets that DVE groups have. I think that is a good idea. I think that we could do more to map the assets and understand the flow of funds to these organizations, sir.

Mr. HILL. Thanks for your time.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for your leadership, and I yield back.

Chairman HIMES. Thank you, Mr. Ranking Member.

The Chair now recognizes the Chair of the Full Committee, Chairwoman Waters, for 5 minutes of questions.

Chairwoman WATERS. Thank you so very much for allocating this time.

I would like to direct a question to Mr. Glaser and, perhaps, Ms. Brooks also.

As you know, Henry Enrique Tarrío is known as the national chairman of the Proud Boys, and he was in town prior to January 6th, and he was ushered out of town by the local metropolitan police. But what is interesting about him is he had a relationship with the FBI, and he became an informant for the FBI, and he informed on people for drugs and gambling and human smuggling, and some other things; but it appears that they turned a blind eye to the fact that he was a domestic terrorist, and, basically, was participating in terrorist activities, et cetera, and getting away with it, and said that, before going into rallies, they would inform law enforcement that the Proud Boys were going to be involved.

Now, even though this hearing is based on financing, I guess my question, Mr. Glaser and Ms. Brooks, is this: Should we look at public policy that would not allow the FBI to have these kinds of relationships where they would turn a blind eye to domestic terrorism in exchange for information and informing on drugs and gambling and that kind of thing?

Mr. Glaser?

Mr. GLASER. Thank you for the question, Chairwoman Waters.

I certainly don't think the FBI should be turning a blind eye to White supremacy and to domestic terrorism of any kind. Of course, the FBI has a difficult job to manage in terms of figuring out the best way to collect information that it could act upon. I don't know that I know enough about the internal deliberations within the FBI that led it to make the decisions that it made, but I certainly do agree that we should be—and I don't think we have been, and when I was in government, we certainly—I will take that as a criticism of myself as well. We certainly did not prioritize efforts against White supremacy as much as we should have. I think that is changing now, and I think it needs to continue to change, and I think it should change throughout the government.

Chairwoman WATERS. Okay. Thank you very much. It is, I think, very important to understand whether or not the FBI will use criminals and domestic terrorists and turn a blind eye in exchange for information about drugs, gambling, and other things. I knew that happened in dealing with drug dealers, where they let some drug dealers stay free if they turned in other drug dealers but this makes it appear they don't care about domestic terrorism.

Do you know anything about this? Ms. Brooks, have you heard about the Proud Boys and their relationship to the FBI?

Ms. BROOKS. Yes, ma'am. Thank you. Thank you, Chairwoman Waters.

I completely agree with my colleague, Mr. Glaser, that they should not turn a blind eye. The Southern Poverty Law Center would say that it is because we failed to take the threat of White supremacy and White nationalists, we failed to recognize the importance of it. And, so, that the FBI would engage in some information-sharing at the risk of our democracy is untenable, and I believe that solely because, as we saw on January 6th, we failed to recognize the threat. I believe we have learned some things, and hopefully, the information-sharing will be taken seriously, and we

will recognize that the greatest threat to our homeland is from White nationalists with a White supremacist ideology.

Chairwoman WATERS. Do you think that I, or Chair Himes, or anyone should pursue public policy in this area of turning a blind eye from our law enforcement in exchange for information that they could give them on other kinds of crimes?

Ms. BROOKS. Yes, ma'am. I do think that it is something you should look into. The Southern Poverty Law Center is happy to assist in that, and we can bring some research together and add it to the record if you would like.

Chairwoman WATERS. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

Chairman HIMES. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

The gentleman from Texas, Mr. Williams, is now recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WILLIAMS OF TEXAS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Hill.

Unfortunately, January 6th was the second politically-motivated attack that I have been involved in, in the past 4 years. As we talked about already this morning, on June 14, 2017, a crazy Bernie Sanders supporter opened fire on a Republican congressional baseball practice and injured me, along with five other individuals. Because of the heroic actions of Capitol Police Special Agents Crystal Griner and David Bailey, and with God being in charge, the only fatality that day was the crazed shooter.

Now, this was a politically-motivated attack driven by anger and extremism, where signs were posted on social media beforehand, and some of the posts read, "Republicans are the Taliban of the U.S.A.," and, "It is time to destroy Trump and company." Unfortunately, if you went on Twitter or Facebook right now, you would find similar messages from hundreds of people spewing this type of hate.

So, Ms. Boukadoom, how could we possibly monitor everything posted on the internet without greatly expanding the police state, and significantly infringing on our First Amendment rights and all Americans' constitutional rights?

Ms. BOUKADOUM. Thank you for the question, Congressman.

I believe that there was a fundamental breakdown in law enforcement response on January 6th, and also, when the attack happened by that Bernie Sanders supporter, because the law enforcement agencies in our country have disproportionately prioritized the wrong thing. This is a question of prioritizing. We have not prioritized White nationalist violence. We have not prioritized violence that is motivated by actions. We have prioritized ideology, and that is deeply troubling, and, in fact, as you said, Congressman, it's a violation of the Constitution.

And so, our position is that we must follow the acts of people. So if there is a threat made by people, whether it is the Proud Boys, or whether its Bernie Sanders supporters, then law enforcement must follow that. What we have seen is a fixation on a certain type of terrorism that is inspired by so-called Muslim ideology, and that has blind-sighted us. And, unfortunately, we missed a huge attack on January 6th, and many people died, and many people are shocked still.

So, that is my answer to you.

Mr. WILLIAMS OF TEXAS. Okay. In 2019, the City of San Francisco voted to label the NRA as a domestic terrorist organization. In August of 2020, Speaker Pelosi called Republican lawmakers, “enemies of the State.” Now, with people being so quick to judge their political opponents as domestic terrorists, it makes me very uncomfortable to expand the powers to go after our own citizens.

So, Dr. Gartenstein-Ross, what safeguards are in place to make sure that any additional powers granted to the State are not abused for political gain?

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. Thank you, Representative Williams. That is a great question, and I share your concern about people throwing the word, “terrorist” around, or overlabeling in this regard. This is why when I emphasized, and to be very clear, I am not advocating a domestic designation statute. I was simply making the case both for and against it. But for any additional powers that are given to the State, I think what is important is: first, setting a clear threshold for what designation, or who the predicate of the crime would be; and second, making sure that it is keyed to actual terrorism.

One thing we have seen over the course of the past year is that we have an unprecedented ability to mobilize for a variety of causes. Some mobilizations result in violence being inflicted by a variety of actors, and I think we are going to see more mobilizations around a variety of causes that end up with violence being a part with the mobilization. I think we need to understand any powers given to the State against that context and against the context that you emphasized that there are a variety of groups, a variety of individuals who increasingly see their opponents as evil, and harming them as something which naturally flows from their very binary world view.

Mr. WILLIAMS OF TEXAS. Okay. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, I have been very concerned about having our kids out of school and learning remotely, but the social skills that our children learn through interacting with other people their age cannot be replicated over a computer, and never will be. We have already seen reports of increased mental health issues, depression, and suicides as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown.

So, Dr. Rogers, can you talk about the role that isolation and mental health play in radicalizing individuals to carry out these horrible attacks?

Chairman HIMES. The gentleman’s time has expired, so the witness will have to provide that statement as an amendment to the witness’ testimony.

Just for clarity, since we are getting started on these hearings, the Chair will allow the witnesses the courtesy of finishing an answer that they have begun before the timer goes off, just as a matter of courtesy and good transmission of information, but that courtesy will begin to be revoked 15 or so seconds after the timer.

So with that, the gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Gottheimer, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GOTTHEIMER. Thank you, Chairman Himes, Chairwoman Waters, and Ranking Member Hill. Thank you very much for put-

ting together this important hearing, and thanks to all of our witnesses for being here today.

I proposed bipartisan legislation called the Freezing Assets of Suspected Terrorists and Enemy Recruits (FASTER) Act, featured in today's hearing. This bill will help law enforcement to freeze the assets of domestic terrorists facing Federal charges for insurrection and seditious conspiracy, like those who stormed the Capitol, but also like ISIS-inspired lone wolf terrorists, and others of that ilk.

Mr. Glaser, given your experience in the private sector and as the former Assistant Secretary for Terrorist Financing and Financial Crimes, you know that for foreign terrorist organizations, the threshold for asset seizure is low. Given what transpired at the Capitol, do you believe that law enforcement could make use of greater authorities in certain cases for domestic extremism, such as insurrection or seditious conspiracy?

Mr. GLASER. Thank you for the question, Congressman. And to be clear, I think we need to make a distinction between seizure and forfeiture on the one hand, and freezing assets on the other hand. The standard for seizing and forfeiting assets under any circumstance is the same under criminal or civil forfeiture. It is relatively lower with respect to freezing assets for foreign organizations. And as I was saying, when I talk about a domestic terrorist financing authority, I am talking about the application of sanctions like authority in that case, but it doesn't necessarily have to involve a freeze.

But to answer your question with respect to your legislation, I do think it addresses a lot of concerns with respect to immobilizing assets quickly. It is linked to the criminal justice system. It is not linked to more traditional terrorist financing types of activity in which the Treasury Department would be involved.

I guess my question is whether or not an asset forfeiture count within an indictment would serve a similar purpose, but I do certainly applaud your effort to ensure that assets relating to insurrection are quickly immobilized, and it seems to me that is what the statute is trying to do.

Mr. GOTTHEIMER. Thank you, sir. And just to follow up, do you believe that the current financial intelligence system we have in place is effective in providing the proper data to law enforcement to combat the financing of these attacks?

Mr. GLASER. I think that our anti-money-laundering counterterrorist financing system does generate an enormous amount of information for the government to analyze and then use. I think there are ways that it can be improved. Public-private partnerships are very important. Daveed talked about the use of 314, both A and B to transfer information, and I think there are maybe tweaks we can make to the suspicious activity reporting that would provide, not necessarily more information, but better information.

Certainly, there is technology that also could be employed by the government and by financial institutions to allow them to go through the massive amounts of data that banks need to go through to file quality suspicious activity reports.

I think there are plenty of ways the system can be improved, but the fact is that Treasury has access to massive amounts of finan-

cial information, and I think the focus should be on improving the quality, not necessarily the quantity.

Mr. GOTTHEIMER. Thank you, sir.

Ms. Brooks, in the work that the Southern Poverty Law Center has done to track domestic extremist groups like the ones that attacked the Capitol on January 6th, have you observed increased use of 21st Century technologies to enable these groups? For example, using websites that are outside of the mainstream to organize and spread hate, and fundraising tools like cryptocurrencies that are more difficult for law enforcement to track?

Ms. BROOKS. Yes, sir. Thank you for the question, and this really speaks to the earlier question as well. As I mentioned in my oral testimony, we note a massive decentralization of these groups and a disbursement of groups, so it makes it harder to track them and harder to follow the money. And we have noticed that the groups are continuing to self-disburse.

Mr. GOTTHEIMER. Are they using cryptocurrencies? Do you notice them using cryptocurrencies?

Ms. BROOKS. Oh, yes, sir. Hold on one second. I have something on that. Yes. Monetized propaganda has continued to increase and we see a lot of personalities distributing—I'm sorry. I apologize. I am looking for my notes on that. Hold on a second.

On December 8th, someone from the far right personalities distributed—oh, sorry. I will stop.

Mr. GOTTHEIMER. Mr. Chairman, will you allow the witness to answer the question? Is that okay?

Chairman HIMES. Oh, yes. If the witness would like to quickly conclude her answer, that is fine.

Mr. GOTTHEIMER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. BROOKS. Thank you. In a single bitcoin transaction, we noted about \$523,000 exchanged on blockchain. The recipients included Nick Fuentes whom, as you know, is a far-right internet personality who is banned from YouTube and other platforms because of his hateful content. And so, we continue to see this money transferring across lines.

Mr. GOTTHEIMER. Thank you, Ms. Brooks. And thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman HIMES. You are welcome.

The gentleman from Ohio, Mr. Davidson, is now recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DAVIDSON. I thank the chairman, and I thank the witnesses for the expertise you have provided for this hearing and the preparation that goes into it. With each passing Congress, I want to share a concern, that really, with each passing Congress, we further erode the Fourth Amendment under the guise of promoting national security. This has evolved from a trend to a real tradition.

As an example, the Corporate Transparency Act took a large chip out of the Fourth Amendment last year. I fear that January 6th will be used as another reason to further destroy the Fourth Amendment and the protections it provides.

Mr. Glaser's testimony states that the U.S. anti-money-laundering (AML) CFT regime can always be fine-tuned and adjusted to address a variety of vulnerabilities, including those presented by racially- and ethnically-motivated violent extremist groups.

Mr. Glaser then lists different tools the Treasury can use to fine-tune and adjust. Let's take a moment to translate what it means to fine-tune and adjust this AML toolbox. It really means that we are further intruding on individual privacy by handing the government more and more of a person's financial record. At what point do we draw the line?

January 6th cannot and should not be used to destroy our right to privacy even further. And, frankly, I was encouraged by Ms. Brooks' notion that we should resist the temptation to further empower the Federal Government because it has been abused and, frankly, it has been abused heavily towards minority groups in the past, and now under the guise of protecting them, it would be a shame to see further powers that erode privacy protections.

So, I urge my colleagues to speak up on this topic and the narrative that really attacks the Fourth Amendment right to privacy. Mr. Glaser, in your testimony you said that the government should consider legislation to protect the U.S. financial system from being abused by domestic terrorists. You acknowledge that the legislation would have to be tailored to comply with the Constitution, specifically the First Amendment, but you really don't make mention of the Fourth Amendment anywhere.

My question is, what constitutes an unreasonable search of an American citizen? Should Americans have any expectation of privacy with respect to their personal finances? Where is that limit, because it sounds like there might not be one. In fact, the word, "privacy" isn't even mentioned in your testimony.

Mr. GLASER. Thank you for the question, Congressman. In my testimony, I did make reference to constitutional due-process requirements. I didn't specifically mention the Fourth Amendment, but, of course, the Fourth Amendment is where many of those constitutional due process requirements are contained, so it certainly wasn't my intention to imply that the Fourth Amendment shouldn't be—we shouldn't ensure that the Fourth Amendment protections adhere.

I would also note that with respect to the Anti-Money Laundering/Combating the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) measures that I recommend be taken, none of them involve providing the government with more financial records.

Mr. DAVIDSON. I appreciate that. I do get that. And, look, you served in a very important post, one of the most important in our government, for that matter, in my view, in terms of overseeing this part of Treasury, which is really vital for our national security, and I think it is relevant for Chairman Himes to be holding this hearing on the topic.

So, the tension is just so incredibly important. I guess, the core question is, do you believe that Americans should have an expectation of privacy with respect to their personal finances?

Mr. GLASER. Yes, of course, I think Americans should have an expectation of privacy with respect to their personal finances. As with every other privacy consideration, it is a question of balancing where the liberal limitations of that privacy begin and end, and I think it is certainly possible and I think we do so every day to respect people's privacy on the one hand, but also give the govern-

ment the tools it needs to protect its citizens from other threats. Because threats to civil liberties come in all direction—

Mr. DAVIDSON. I appreciate that. I apologize. I have to get at least one more question in. I have about a dozen, so. But Mr. Gartenstein-Ross, according to the LexisNexis report last fall, the scope of AML is huge. So my question is, should we double down on a static AML system in an ever-evolving industry that is growing compliance costs or should we try to overhaul it?

There was a really good BuzzFeed article last year that talked about the problems where the biggest banks, frankly, are the biggest money launderers, how do we address that—

Chairman HIMES. The gentleman's time has expired.

The gentleman from New York, Mr. Torres, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TORRES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Both the Code of Federal Regulations and the PATRIOT Act provide the Federal definition of, "domestic terrorism", but as has been noted, there was no Federal designation of domestic terrorism nor was there Federal prosecution of domestic terrorism as a crime unto itself, all of which has me wondering, what is the point of defining domestic terrorism in Federal law if it doesn't result in designation for prosecution, what practical impact does the Federal definition have on domestic counterterrorism and, in particular, counterterrorism finance?

Mr. Glaser?

You are on mute, Mr. Glaser.

Chairman HIMES. The Chair will instruct that 25 seconds be added back to the gentleman from New York's time.

Mr. TORRES. I appreciate that, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman HIMES. Mr. Glaser, are you with us?

Mr. TORRES. Mr. Glaser, you are on mute.

Is there anyone else on the panel who can address this question?

Ms. BOUKADOUM. I am happy to jump in. The domestic terrorism definition that is in the PATRIOT Act is really defined for FBI investigatory purposes. And you are absolutely right, Congressman Torres—and it is good to see you, again—that there is no parallel charge that goes with the domestic terrorism definition. So, it is really designed for investigatory purposes.

What we submit is that the material support for terrorism statute—as we know, there are two of them. There is one with an international nexus that is required and there is one that allows for investigating material support for terrorism, domestic terrorism, in particular, as defined in the PATRIOT Act with underlying statutes that allow for any crimes that take place within the United States that have no international nexus.

And we believe that second piece of the material support for terrorism statute has been neglected, and can be nicely used with the domestic terrorism definition as laid out in the PATRIOT Act, and we hope that statutory framework will be used to actually go after violent White nationalists and others.

Mr. TORRES. Much has been said about the First Amendment and domestic counterterrorism. I have a hypothetical. Suppose there were a White supremacist organization with a publicly-stated mission of murdering minorities, overthrowing the government, and establishing a White ethnostate, could the Federal Govern-

ment legally open an investigation into the membership and financing of such an organization without running afoul of the First Amendment?

Ms. BOUKADOUM. That is an excellent question and it is not a hypothetical, Congressman. It is actually a fact. We have seen, as my friends and colleagues at the Southern Poverty Law Center who are part of our coalition have highlighted time and time again, that there are myriad organizations that have absolutely espoused violence out in public on Facebook, on big tech platforms, that have not been taken seriously. And so, yes, absolutely, the financial institutions and financial enforcement apparatus can trace those groups and should be tracing those groups, frankly.

But as I said, there has been a deprioritization of White nationalist violence at the expense of our collective security. So I would submit that there is nothing wrong, or that there is nothing that runs afoul of the First Amendment to go into investigating those types of groups.

Mr. TORRES. I want to make one observation, and let me know if you agree or not, but it seems to me there is a cognitive dissonance or double standard on the part of law enforcement. If you are a member of a violent enterprise like the mafia or a gang, you can be prosecuted under the RICO law, but if you are a member of a violent White supremacist enterprise, then somehow you are protected by the First Amendment. Can anyone on the panel explain the disconnect there?

Ms. BOUKADOUM. I think that is an excellent point. And in my written testimony that we submitted for the record, we highlight that RICO and conspiracy statutes are extremely broad and should absolutely be used against particularly organized White nationalist groups that, as you mentioned, espoused an ethno-national state that wants to get rid of and kill millions of people, but I would love to open it up for the other panelists.

Ms. BROOKS. Thank you.

Thank you for the question, Representative Torres. And I completely agree there. The Southern Poverty Law Center documents White nationalist groups today to be clear their mandate is to create a White ethnostate, and they have proved time and time, again, that they will carry out violent means to reach that end.

I would also offer that the Southern Poverty Law Center has used RICO statutes in the course of our civil suits against hate and extremist groups over the past couple of decades and I think that—those are the laws that we mean when we say that there exist current statutes that law enforcement could use to address the real threat of domestic terrorism.

And for me, and I agree with my colleagues in the Leadership Conference, it is important that we educate ourselves and recognize the very real threat of domestic terrorism. That is why the Southern Poverty Law Center supports the Prevention Act.

Law, as you know, is a very, very blunt tool and we advocate for further education and communication between and coordination between the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice, and the FBI. And they could really work together to lower the threat level and strengthen a partnership that would blunt these hate and extremist groups.

So, thank you for the question.

Chairman HIMES. The gentleman's time has expired. The gentleman from Ohio, Mr. Gonzalez, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GONZALEZ OF OHIO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our panel for today's testimony. It is an important hearing and, Mr. Chairman, I do appreciate your comments at the beginning about how this shouldn't have a political lens on it, and I think we need to be honest with ourselves about that.

I want to start by referencing the testimony of Dr. Gartenstein-Ross. You talked about, in chilling fashion, how extremism is poised for growth. Unfortunately, I agree with you 100 percent, for a variety of reasons, and you also highlighted reciprocal radicalization, and I think that is right.

I would argue that there is an escalating component to it as well, one side does one thing, the other side escalates and radicalizes, and there is a countermovement that does the same. And we are in this Ping-Pong of extremism, unfortunately.

So with that as my first question for Dr. Gartenstein-Ross, in your research, did you find that any of the political violence from the summer—and I am not creating an equivalency, so let's just get that clear. What happened at the Capitol is far worse. I am not creating an equivalency, but I am trying to understand the mechanisms.

In your eyes, did the political violence from the summer inspire or activate some of the far-right nationalist movements that we saw at the Capitol?

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. Thank you, sir, for that question. I would say it is unsettled, but I believe that the answer is yes, in a rather subtle way. There is a really good book called, "How Terror Evolves" by Yannick Veilleux-Lepage, which looks at airplane hijackings. And it argues that tactics evolve from one group to another regardless of ideology, and it even looks at criminal groups that have used airplane hijackings.

I think what we saw over the course of the past year is a number of different mobilizations, starting with the anti-lockdown mobilization, then there is a racial justice mobilization, then an anti-fascist/anarchist mobilization, and finally a pro-Trump steal an election mobilization, and those aren't all extremist mobilizations by any means, but all of them were mobilizations that were very powerful.

And I think that each mobilization learned from the other ones, and the lesson that was learned by the time of the Capitol attack is that attacking a symbol of government is extraordinarily dramatic, and there are multiple examples of that from attacks on mayor's offices to autonomous zones and attacks on police precincts that provided some tactical guide for what occurred.

So I do think that different groups, both extremist and non-extremist, are learning to mobilize faster than before. And all of them are learning from one another's tactics, and tactics that we may applaud today may be used tomorrow by a group that we utterly despise and that despises us.

Mr. GONZALEZ OF OHIO. Thank you for that answer.

And a follow-up, what role do public figures, politicians or otherwise, play in contributing to the violent behavior that we have seen

across society over the last year? And how can we be better leaders?

This is where I want you to lecture us and tell us how we have failed the American people.

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. I love the question. And we are in an extraordinarily polarized environment where even the slightest differences of point of view can lead to recrimination, fear, calls for people to be fired, different labels being thrust upon other people. I think now is the time for political leaders to show wisdom, and let me applaud this subcommittee for the bipartisan way that it put this hearing together.

I applaud it for getting witnesses who can speak to both sides of the aisle, but I agree with the premise of the question that ultimately, we need to figure out how to step back from the precipice. We need to figure out how we live together within a system that we all support.

We need to figure out how the fact that the person next to us disagrees on some issues doesn't cause us to think of that person in a binary way as being evil or beneath us or someone who is our enemy. We are struggling with that, and part of it is politicians, and part of it is the systems of communications that we have.

It is a complex, multifaceted problem, but the question you asked, sir, is the exact right question, and politicians have often been a part of the problem.

Mr. GONZALEZ OF OHIO. Thank you. And with my final 30 seconds, I am going to share a brief story. I voted for impeachment, as most of you know, and I am a Republican. So, I have been the subject of threats in two different instances in the last year, one from the left and one from the right. And I will tell you my personal opinion is if this body and some of us on this committee don't start acting more responsibly, what happened in January is only the beginning, and that is up to us. That requires real leadership.

And so, I thank you for your answers, and I hope we will heed those lessons.

Chairman HIMES. The gentleman's time has expired.

The gentleman from Massachusetts, Mr. Lynch, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LYNCH. Chairman Himes, first, I want to congratulate you on your chairmanship. I am proud and happy to be a member of this subcommittee, and thanks for putting this hearing together. Congratulations to the ranking member as well.

I want to talk about cryptocurrencies a little bit. The use of cryptocurrencies by terrorist networks, drug traffickers, and other illicit activities is well-documented. I know Mr. Glaser, we worked together when I used to Chair the Task Force on Terrorist Financing back in the day, but we had experts from FinCEN to the RAND Corporation. They have all expressed concerns about the use of cryptocurrencies by criminals, and we do have some examples that haven't been mentioned here.

One example is the far-right group, the White supremacist platform, The Daily Stormer. They actually solicit donations from users by cryptocurrency. They use Monero, but there have been high-profile, high-value bitcoin transfers to a number of these U.S.-based groups. These are domestic far-right extremist wallets.

As a matter of fact, earlier this month, Treasury Secretary Yellen said, “I see the promise of these new technologies, but I also see the reality. Cryptocurrencies have been used to launder the profits of online drug traffickers and they have also been used as a tool to finance terrorism.”

So Mr. Glaser, and also Dr. Rogers, I think you could speak to this as well, how does the use of cryptocurrencies—and I Chair the Task Force on FinTech, and we are worried about this. We are trying to adopt some of these technologies, but this is one of those double-edged swords, I guess. How does the use of cryptocurrencies affect the ability of law enforcement agencies and research organizations and financial institutions to identify and trace the funding of domestic extremists?

Mr. GLASER. Thank you for the question, Congressman Lynch, and it is good to see you, again, and thank you for your leadership on these types of issues over the years.

After 9/11, all of the focus was on Hawala, and there was this notion that it was some sort of magical, mysterious system that nobody could comprehend and it was impossible to trace through. And in the end, we found out that really wasn’t the case; it operated based on the same principles as a lot of other financial transfers, and it was just a matter of bringing it into the system in an appropriate way. And I think that there is an analogy between that and cryptocurrencies.

Cryptocurrencies aren’t inherently bad and, in fact, as Secretary Yellen said, they have a lot of useful purposes and could really help on issues such as financial inclusion.

That said, they are also subject to abuse, so the challenge is to bring them into the system and regulate them in the appropriate way. I do think that the Treasury Department approaches it the right way through the regulation of exchanges, applying customer due diligence, programmatic requirements in suspicious activity reporting requirements to the exchanges which is where the cryptocurrencies are ultimately transferred into Fiat currency and where Fiat currency is transferred back into the cryptocurrency.

Again, I highlight that FinCEN has a rule out right now, a proposed rule, related to unhosted wallets, which is a loophole in the system right now and that is a place where I think people should be focusing.

But the fact is that there are some cryptocurrencies out there which try to design themselves along the fault lines of the AML/CFT restrictions. We need to look at those. We need to make sure that those types of cryptocurrencies are banned, but we also need to provide opportunities for the sector to grow in a supervised, regulated way as I think it is, for the most part, right now.

Mr. LYNCH. Wouldn’t it require getting rid of the pseudonymist nature, where we don’t have digital identities? Isn’t that the core of the problem? And that is what the users or the advocates of crypto, a lot of them, cling to that; that they want to decentralize anonymous or pseudonymist systems. Is that part of the problem?

Mr. GLASER. Yes. Anti-money-laundering, countertrust financing rules and regulations at the end are about transparency. It is about transparency in the international financial system and the domestic financial system. And in certain ironic ways, cryptocurrencies

provide enhanced opportunities in certain ways for law enforcement agencies to be able to trace transactions that aren't there and sort of bulk transactions in the private sector.

But, again, I come back to, [inaudible] And I think the point of entry is at the exchanges, which is where we are trying to regulate it now.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I yield back.

Chairman HIMES. The gentleman's time has expired. The gentleman from Texas, Mr. Taylor, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TAYLOR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate this hearing, and I appreciate the witnesses and the expertise that they bring to this important topic. Domestic terrorism obviously is something that I think, with a little historical perspective—I think we remember Puerto Rican separatists shooting Members of Congress on the Floor of the U.S. House back in the 1950s, so this is a long path that we have been going down in trying to fight this.

And, obviously, I was intrigued, Mr. Chairman, by your comments about the domestic terrorism being more difficult because they have First and Fourth Amendment rights.

But I remember my own time as a Marine on the U.S./Mexican border contending with the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), and the Posse Comitatus Act, dealing with the international component and really the PATRIOT Act, dealing with that and trying to figure out, well, okay, where does the international stop and the domestic begin, and how do we share data between the CIA and the FBI, and how is that legal, when is that legal, which, unfortunately, 9/11 really revealed to us we had some problems there.

So just going down the path of making sure that we are sharing information across platforms at the same time, protecting peoples' rights, and I think that is something that we are all conscious of, that push/pull.

Dr. Gartenstein-Ross, just in terms of the way you think about this, is there enough sharing between the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, and local law enforcement? Are there regulatory or statutory changes that we can make at the congressional level to encourage information-sharing so that we can actually stop/prevent terrorist actions?

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. That is an excellent question. As you know, sir, DHS, one of its mandates is to share information with local law enforcement, which is a relatively effective system; although, you have had a number of times where some of the information shared ends up getting leaked to the press, which, in turn, causes controversy and then impedes sharing.

One of the reasons why we were so slow to look at WSE extremism as the government relates to a 2009 controversy about a report on what was dubbed right-wing extremism at the time. So, it is not clear to me that there are specific fixes that can immediately leap to mind, but I will say that this is something that we should look into to see if there are things that impede the flow of information. Anything that will allow information to be shared more widely will be a positive.

Mr. TAYLOR. Mr. Glaser, just given your experience in government, what would you say to that in terms of information-sharing between—again, I saw the restriction when it went from international to domestic. There were definitely some walls that were created there in the 1970s that were knocked down a little bit after 9/11, but do we have those in terms of dealing with this problem?

Mr. GLASER. Thank you for the question. And I agree with your premise that there needs to be a vibrant partnership between the public sector and the private sector to attack these sorts of issues. In fact, when I was in—

Mr. TAYLOR. We will get to that in a second, but the question is, within the Federal Government and local law enforcement, are there walls that we need to break down statutorily or by regulation?

Mr. GLASER. With respect to financial intelligence, I think that there is very good information-sharing between the Federal Government and the State Governments. State Governments have access to suspicious activity reports, so I think that there are probably mechanisms that we could implement to improve them, but they wouldn't be legislative in nature.

Mr. TAYLOR. Okay. And then Ms. Boukadoum, this is something you are concerned about, is the role of private companies taking it upon themselves to report to the authorities what they perceive to be problematic when they are not required to do it, right?

And so I am thinking recently there was an allegation that Bank of America went in, pulled all the data from their customers, and reported that to law enforcement without having a warrant, and that—in assisting the Fourth Amendment question, should the government even be willing to accept data that they don't have the right to get, that the Fourth Amendment precludes them from? Your opening statement leads me to believe that you are concerned about this as well.

Ms. BOUKADOUM. Absolutely, Congressman. I think that civil liberties have to be protected, and I think that the private sector, Bank of America, big tech have to really make sure that there is a notice requirement that is provided to customers and also that there is, yes, a warrant from the FISA court, even though, it is a secret court, but there are mechanisms for making sure that due process and transparency to the extent possible are complied with.

Mr. TAYLOR. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman HIMES. The gentleman yields back. The gentlewoman from Pennsylvania, Ms. Dean, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. DEAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank you for hosting this important hearing. I will get right to some questions. I thank all of those who are testifying today to help us understand this better.

Mr. Rogers, if I could start with you, what evidence is there of alternative financing platforms contributing to expanded recruitment or radicalization of domestic terror groups? Do we have any evidence of alternative financing platforms?

Mr. ROGERS. Thank you, Congresswoman, for the question. And if I may clarify, by alternative financing platforms, can you provide

more detail about exactly the sorts of platforms you are referring to?

Ms. DEAN. Fundraising.

Mr. ROGERS. Okay. That is sort of the core of our entire research, how extensively those sorts of platforms are being used, and it speaks to a lot of the discussion today that most of the financial activities not through the kind of, traditional banking, there is a lot of other sort of companies and chokepoints being involved whether you are talking about crowdfunding platforms—I mentioned GiveSendGo as an example, Rakuten Pay, all of these companies, they sit on top of the larger kind of payments in banking.

At the end of the day, the money lands somewhere that is a more traditional bank or payment provider, but even before you get to those companies, there is a whole host of smaller and alternative, what you may call, tech companies, that are facilitating these payments and we outline close to 100 of them in our report.

Ms. DEAN. And would you say that those digital fundraising platforms are contributing to the diffusion of harmful ideologies?

Mr. ROGERS. Absolutely. As I mentioned in my testimony, not only are they just helping or facilitating raising funding for these groups, but merchandising platforms. Go to Etsy.com and type in, “QAnon”, and the sale of merchandise helps further the ideology, kind of creates that, as I call it, that team jersey to help the group recruit and further whatever ideology they are peddling.

Ms. DEAN. Thank you. I appreciate that.

Mr. GLASER, if I could turn to you. FinCEN, at the Department of the Treasury, is at the forefront of detecting illicit financial transactions involving potential crimes in terrorism, and I am thinking of, for example, advisories regarding possible human trafficking or drug trafficking. But does FinCEN provide this type of guidance related to armed domestic extremists or mass shooters in terms of potential purchase of weapons, amassing of arsenals of guns, or other weapons for attacks?

Is there such an advisory alert? We are examining communications and gaps in communications—is there such an advisory around the amassing of weapons?

Mr. GLASER. FinCEN does not currently have an advisory relating to domestic terrorism. I would not be surprised if they were working on one right now, and I think it is a great question. In my testimony, I specifically reference that as one of the things that FinCEN could be doing.

And as I said, I wouldn’t be surprised if they were working on one right now, but there is not currently one out there.

Ms. DEAN. There was legislation that was introduced last session by my friend, Representative Wexton—perhaps you are familiar with it—the Gun Violence Prevention Through Financial Intelligence Act. It was a bill in simplicity that would develop an advisory notification to assist financial institutions in detecting and then reporting suspicious or illegal financial activities around firearms.

Do you think that legislation is worthy, and would be a step in the right direction?

Mr. GLASER. Thank you, Congresswoman. I must admit that I am not familiar with that specific legislation. I will say that banks

already have the obligation to report suspicious activity to FinCEN, but there are holes in it relating to illegal activity relating to firearms, I am sure that is something that should be addressed.

Ms. DEAN. Thanks so much.

And maybe Ms. Brooks, I will go for a quick question to you. How can the Federal Government provide better tools or facilitate coordination, again, about communication with State law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, the Federal Government—what should we be doing to share information more efficiently?

Ms. BROOKS. Thank you for the question. The Southern Poverty Law Center, of course, supports the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act because it really is about improving communication and coordinating communication in response across agencies.

Of course, it doesn't provide for additional Federal criminal enforcement power, but we believe that improved communication and coordination was the big part of the issue on January 6th, so we support that, just the sharing of information and acting upon that information.

Thank you for the question, Representative Dean.

Ms. DEAN. Thank you.

I yield back. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman HIMES. The gentlewoman's time has expired. The gentleman from Illinois, Mr. Garcia, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GARCIA OF ILLINOIS. Thank you, Chairman Himes and Ranking Member Hill, for convening this hearing, and thank you to the witnesses for joining us today and sharing your research and knowledge.

We know that racism and right-wing extremism have long histories in this country. As an immigrant, I have seen it for most of my life. Donald Trump tapped into that from the very start of his campaign, and what happened here on January 6th is a symptom of something very serious.

Like many of you, I was locked down in my office that afternoon. I didn't know whether or not armed militia had entered my office building. I didn't know if they were looking for me as a proud immigrant, Mexican-American Congressman, but I knew they wanted to stop a Democrat from being elected President.

It is easy to say that the people who stormed the Capitol last month represent a small fringe in our politics, but they have allies and friends in high places.

I have a couple of questions. Ms. Brooks, in your testimony, you gave us a good timeline of how racist extremism has connected to party politics. Could you talk a little more about how the radical right entered the mainstream and what we should be worried about moving forward?

Ms. BROOKS. Thank you so much for the question. As the Southern Poverty Law Center has documented over the last couple of decades, there has been an increase in the number of active hate groups in the United States. We found about 10 years ago, maybe 15 years ago, that that increase is directly connected to the shifting demographics within the United States.

And so, the decrease in the White population serving as a numeric majority has served to create fear and anxiety in the White population. As we saw with the ascension of President Obama, that

was kind of a peak moment, and an example, if you will, for Whites who were beginning to think that they were being displaced, and feeding into a White nationalist trope around the great replacement or White genocide.

So, we have seen an increase in that rhetoric. What we saw over the last 6 years was an increase in that rhetoric that was echoed from the highest office in the country, from the President, and that served to kind of fuel and carry the disinformation, fear, and anxiety to this fever-pitch position in which we find ourselves in today.

Mr. GARCIA OF ILLINOIS. Thank you.

Dr. Rogers, you studied radicalization and terrorism in a number of countries and your report on bankrolling bigotry mentioned that far-right groups use the 501(c)(3) nonprofit status to look legitimate. What role does money in our political system play in fanning the flames of right-wing extremism? Do all of these nonprofits and shell companies make it harder to track their role?

Mr. ROGERS. Thank you, Congressman, for the question. For starters, I am not an expert on tax exempt organizations, and I am certainly happy to point you to ones that I have worked with in the past.

But it is my understanding that the abuse by some of the charity and the nonprofit tax-exempt rules has grown over time as political campaigns and what-not have become more expensive as a way to shield identities involved in political donations and things like that.

And so, that abuse has grown over the past decades, while at the same time, the resources for enforcing the 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) rules to say that if a group applies as a supposedly educational charity, to enforce that they actually are engaging in educational charitable activities and not say, secretly a violent militia, the resources that the IRS has to fulfill that regulatory compliance role have decreased over time for a whole host of reasons.

So one of our recommendations that we have taken from one of our experts is to actually break out that function from the IRS. The IRS is ultimately a revenue-generating organization, and this part of the IRS is not, by definition, revenue-generating, so it tends to be kind of ignored.

If you took that regulatory function out, much as the charity commission in the U.K. as an independent organization to fulfill that role, that might help with the compliance and the enforcement problem. So, just one idea related to that.

Mr. GARCIA OF ILLINOIS. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman HIMES. The gentleman yields back. And the gentleman from Massachusetts, Mr. Auchincloss, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. AUCHINCLOSS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks to those who are testifying today. As part of our ongoing investigation into the insurrectionist attack on the Capitol on January 6th, the attack laid bare our vulnerability to domestic terrorism, and we need to examine solutions to stop future attacks before they happen.

I believe it would be a grave mistake, however, to maintain permanent fencing around our Capitol. Constituents, advocates, have the right to visit the home of our democracy and speak with their Representatives to share their thoughts, agreements, and concerns.

We need innovative tools to root out domestic terrorism, and protect Members, staff, and visitors without turning this building into a fortress surrounded by fences topped with barbed wire.

And, indeed, we also need to find ways to protect places of worship, including in my own district, without them having to resort to a military posture as well, in particular, Jewish places of worship.

I represent one of the most densely-populated Jewish districts in the country, and I know that my Jewish constituents who go to places of worship are increasingly on edge and increasingly concerned about the threats of domestic terrorism targeted and fueled by anti-Semitism.

I wonder if, first, Ms. Brooks, and then, Mr. Rogers, might speak for 30 seconds to a minute each about the intersection between anti-Semitism and domestic terrorism in this country and whether they have seen a rise in both intent and actions targeted against Jewish people.

MS. BROOKS. Thank you so much for the question. And we don't talk about this enough, but there is a direct link and a connection between White nationalism, White supremacy, and anti-Semitism. It should not be separated at all. There has been an increase in anti-Semitism in this country and globally for the last couple of decades, and people have failed to pay attention.

We have these major violent events like the Tree of Life Synagogue, like what happened in Escondido, and then we move on, but we are not connecting the dots. We are in this together, and a White supremacist agenda would separate everyone from who they are. So to be clear, we should stand together against White nationalism and anti-Semitism in support of the Jewish population. Thank you for the question.

MR. AUCHINCLOSS. I just want to state, for the record, how much I agree with standing together. I think the Jewish people, as well as my African-American constituents know that where there is conspiracy theorizing, where there is extremism, it is just a matter of time before they come for Black Americans and for Jewish Americans, such has been our history. So, thank you for saying that.

Mr. Rogers, I welcome your thoughts as well.

MR. ROGERS. Thank you, Congressman. And I could not agree more with both your thoughts and Ms. Brooks, your statement on the subject, another subject that I am passionate about as well. As you say, if history is any guide, hate is hate, and it always comes for people of color and the Jewish community as well.

One other point I would add is that in many ways, the QAnon conspiracy theory phenomenon is itself a kind of remix, if you will, or a mash-up of historically all of the various sorts of anti-Semitic Jewish blood libels. The idea of the cabal at the top, et cetera, et cetera, that if not explicit, is a very thinly veiled version of the same blood libel that has been circulating for a hundred, if not, hundreds of years.

And so, yes, I think they go very much hand in hand whether explicit or not, and I think they are linked and solidarity is obviously of utmost importance.

MR. AUCHINCLOSS. Mr. Rogers, are there particular actions that you would recommend Congress pursue relative to anti-Semitism

and the intersection of anti-Semitism and domestic terrorism, in particular, and the spread of disinformation about that?

Mr. ROGERS. I think there are a number of regulatory fronts that all go to the general problem of disinformation as a whole, and I don't know that we have the time to get into all of them here, but I think they certainly fall into three big categories, with the one most relevant to today's discussion being this idea of government platform liability, that our data is showing what a key role these sorts of platforms play in facilitating the activities of these groups.

And the fact that the liability is so nebulous or nonexistent through things like Section 230 and what-not, what we found is that there are already policies in place against all of these hate and extremist groups, but they are just simply not enforced.

So updating that kind of platform liability to help drive enforcement, I think is one of the key areas that we can focus on.

Mr. AUCHINCLOSS. Slightly—

Chairman HIMES. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. AUCHINCLOSS. Okay. Thanks.

Chairman HIMES. I believe that every present member of the subcommittee has had an opportunity to ask questions. If that is incorrect, speak up now or forever hold your peace.

Hearing no one, I would like to thank our witnesses for their testimony today and for an excellent, excellent discussion.

The Chair notes that some Members may have additional questions for this panel, which they may wish to submit in writing. Without objection, the hearing record will remain open for 5 legislative days for Members to submit written questions to these witnesses and to place their responses in the record. Also, without objection, Members will have 5 legislative days to submit extraneous materials to the Chair for inclusion in the record.

I ask our witnesses to please respond as promptly as you are able, and I noted a couple of questions that sadly were cut off by the timer, and I will ask the staff to facilitate that.

With that, I will thank our excellent witnesses one more time, and the hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:51 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

February 25, 2021

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STATEMENT OF IMAN BOUKADOUM ON BEHALF OF
THE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE ON CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

U.S. HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY, INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND
MONETARY POLICY

HEARING ON "DOLLARS AGAINST DEMOCRACY: DOMESTIC TERRORIST FINANCING IN
THE AFTERMATH OF INSURRECTION."

FEBRUARY 25, 2021

Chairman Himes, Ranking Member Hill, and distinguished members, thank you for holding this timely hearing today on domestic terrorism financing in the aftermath of the white nationalist insurrection on January 6, 2021. My name is Iman Boukadoum, senior program manager of Fighting Hate and Bias at The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. The Leadership Conference is a coalition of more than 220 national organizations working to build an America as good as its ideals. Founded in 1950 by Arnold Aronson, A. Philip Randolph, and Roy Wilkins, The Leadership Conference has coordinated national advocacy efforts on behalf of every major civil and human rights law since 1957.

I want to express my gratitude to this subcommittee and its members, the maintenance personnel and cleaning and other staff, the food workers, and the law enforcement personnel who worked in the Capitol during the time of the insurrection and continue to work. Your shared commitment to democracy and to service has never been more vital.

Last month's violent insurrection, fueled by white supremacy and white nationalism, shocked the world. However, for those of us who are a part of Black, Brown, Native, Arab, Muslim, Jewish, Sikh, disabled, immigrant, or LGBTQ communities, the violent insurrection on our nation's Capital did not shock us. Sadly, for too many members of our coalition and the people we represent, white nationalist violence is not new. Personally, as a Muslim and Algerian-American, I appreciate the opportunity to be heard today, as we wrestle with the aftermath of the violent January 6 attack on the Capitol.

White supremacist violence is all too familiar to me, my community, my former clients, and my family. Its structural manifestations appear within too many institutions and have thrived since the founding of our nation, including in recent years. Therefore, I submit this testimony today to reiterate our support for **prioritizing** holding white nationalists accountable across institutions in a systemic way, by using existing tools, and our opposition to the creation of additional national security, domestic terrorism, or surveillance authorities to combat this severe threat.

To be clear, we echo the sense of urgency that many in Congress have recently brought to the debate regarding the very real threat of white nationalist violence. Yet a sober analysis of our nation's history shows that even well-intentioned national security laws are invariably weaponized against Black, Brown, and Muslim communities, because white nationalist violence is not prioritized. For these reasons, we oppose any legislation that would create an added charge for domestic terrorism or any enhanced or additional criminal penalties including to trace funding relating to domestic terrorism. The federal government, including the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network within the Treasury Department, has



many tools at its disposal to investigate and support Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Department of Justice (DOJ) prosecutions, including some 50 terrorism-related statutes and over a dozen other criminal statutes and authorities. These measures authorize both the FBI and DOJ to prioritize and address white nationalist violence and financing now, irrespective of a link to international terrorism.

The Federal Government Has Known that White Nationalist Violence Has Been a Serious Threat to Our National Security

First, it is important to highlight that the federal government has had robust intelligence indicating the violent predilections of organized hate groups and “lone wolf” white nationalists throughout the United States for many years now. With countless atrocities perpetrated in recent memory, from the Tree of Life synagogue killings, to the massacre of Latinos in El Paso, to the devastating massacre at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, it is no secret that white nationalist violence has been on the rise. Independent academic institutions have also documented the critical rise in white supremacist threats throughout our country. Professor Brian Levin, the Director of the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino, testified before the House Committee on Homeland Security in September of 2019, and explained that “[w]hite supremacist/far right extremists are now, the most ascendant transnational terror threat facing the homeland, in a fluid and somewhat diversifying risk matrix.”¹ Even the FBI elevated white supremacist activity to a “national threat priority,” and in 2020, FBI Director Christopher Wray testified before both House and Senate committees about the serious threat that violent white supremacist organizations and the people who ascribe to their ideologies pose to our national security.² Indeed, the failure to take seriously and prioritize the threat of white nationalist violence is the true reason violent insurrectionists were able to easily storm our Capitol on January 6, 2021.

Selective Enforcement by Federal Agencies Deprioritized White Nationalist Crimes

White nationalist violence and violence inspired by ISIS or Al-Queda are treated very differently regardless of where it takes place. For purposes of this hearing, I will focus on the ways that over-policing of financial transactions since 9/11 has chilled charitable giving by Muslims. In Islam, *zakat* is a fundamental pillar of our faith. This core tenet requires that any Muslim who makes an income pay a percentage every year to charity. The Material Support for Terrorism statutes give very broad authority to the Treasury Department to trace and freeze bank accounts without much transparency or procedural guardrails. This has led to the shuttering of countless charities and bank accounts of Arab Americans or Muslim-American institutions, without due process. According to the ACLU, “[t]errorism financing laws are overly broad and lack procedural safeguards that would protect American charities against

¹ Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism, Global Terrorism: Threats to the Homeland, Part I, September 10, 2019, https://www.csusb.edu/sites/default/files/GLOBAL%20TERRORISM-%20cong%20BL2%2091019_0.pdf

² Erin Donaghue, Racially-motivated violent extremists elevated to “national threat priority,” FBI director says (Feb. 5, 2020), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/racially-motivated-violent-extremism-isis-national-threat-priority-fbi-director-christopher-wray/>; see also <https://www.statesman.com/story/news/politics/elections/2020/10/09/fact-check-did-fbi-director-warn-about-white-supremacist-violence/114251512/>



government mistake and abuse.”³ Moreover, various national security laws also provide the government with wide latitude to investigate, interdict, and stop financing deemed materially supporting terrorist action on U.S. soil by a U.S. entity that is not affiliated with a foreign terrorist group.⁴ Yet, the overwhelming number of cases prioritized by the Treasury Department and federal agencies focus on “international terrorism” which covers violent threats that have a nexus outside our nation’s shores, even if they stem from U.S. citizens acting only within our country. As renowned legal scholar and expert Professor Shirin Sinnar of Stanford Law School describes:

The law permits broader surveillance, wider criminal charges, and more punitive treatment for crimes labeled international terrorism. Law enforcement agencies frequently consider U.S. Muslims “international” threats even when they have scant foreign ties. As a result, they police and punish them more intensely than white nationalists and other “domestic” threats. This legal divide not only harms individuals and communities but also reinforces distorted public perceptions of terrorism that fuel⁵

This failure to prioritize white nationalist crimes has come at a severe cost to my community and other communities I work with. By over-policing innocuous financial transactions by mosques or those originating from the Middle East or Muslim-majority countries, our government has failed to prioritize the actual threat of white nationalist violence percolating all around us. This has also meant that charitable giving, particularly in Arab and Muslim communities in the U.S., has been severely chilled by the oversurveillance and aggressive application of powerful, existing terrorism statutes. Countless innocent people, particularly in the Muslim community, have effectively lost their right to First Amendment-protected free exercise rights to perform religious duties while violent white nationalists become emboldened to commit more acts of hate violence with impunity.

What is clear is that the Treasury Department and other federal law enforcement agencies already have vast administrative and statutory authorities at their disposal, which they routinely use to disrupt financing relating to clandestine activity. What history demonstrates is that providing additional national security authorities to fight “domestic terrorism” groups would devastate already over-policed and over-surveilled communities of color and Muslims. The systemic racism that infects the criminal legal system means that so-called “domestic terrorism” approaches to addressing white nationalist violence inevitably come back to harm communities of color, including Muslims.

Federal Agencies Must Redirect Focus Toward Hate Crimes Perpetrated by White Supremacists

Not only has the federal government turned a blind eye to the serious white nationalist threat plaguing our country by failing to use existing tools to trace and cut off their funding sources, we have also seen

³ The American Civil Liberties Union, Block Faith, Freezing Charity, <https://www.aclu.org/report/blocking-faith-freezing-charity-chilling-muslim-charitable-giving-war-terrorism-financing?redirect=cpreirect/39849> at p. 7 (last visited Feb. 16, 2021)

⁴ *Id.* at 10.

⁵ Shirin Sinnar, *Separate and Unequal: The Law of “Domestic” and “International” Terrorism*, 117 MICH. L. REV. 1333 (2019). Available at: <https://repository.law.umich.edu/mlr/vol117/iss7/2>



disproportionate misdirection of federal law enforcement resources targeting Black, Brown, and Muslim communities for decades. This has led to the over-criminalization and over-policing of Black, Brown, and Muslim persons whose privacy, due process, and religious rights have been severely diminished. Equally problematic is the lack of focus by federal agencies on protecting communities from white nationalists and hate crimes by not even mandating accurate hate crimes data reporting to begin to address this crisis. For example, in 2019, the most recent year for which FBI hate crimes data is available, the FBI's Unified Crime Reporting Program (UCR) reported that 7,314 hate crime incidents occurred that year. The data available indicates that 2019 was the deadliest year for hate crimes since reporting began in 1991. And yet, we also know that this number grossly underestimates the actual number of hate crimes in the United States, as the FBI's report is based on voluntary local law enforcement reporting data to the FBI. In 2019, 86 percent of participating agencies did not report one single hate crime to the FBI, including at least 71 cities with populations over 100,000. Just 14 percent of the more than 15,000 participating agencies actively reported at least one hate crime. Meanwhile, the number of law enforcement agencies providing data declined for the second straight year.

When I know that hate crimes by white nationalists targeting me and my community are not even reported to the federal government, it sends a very clear message: You and your community don't matter. But groups are stepping up.⁶ The recent uptick in violence targeting Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities as a result of white supremacist lies and rhetoric around COVID-19 has been documented in real time by organizations like Asian Americans Advancing Justice - AAJC and Stop AAPI Hate, because communities have lost faith in law enforcement.⁷

The Federal Government, Including the Treasury Department, Must Use Existing Tools in an Equitable Way to Investigate Violent White Nationalist Funding Streams

Many communities in our country live in a reality where government failure to police the serious scourge of white nationalist violence and hate crimes on the one hand, is combined with the over-policing and over-surveillance of their mosques and community centers on the other. It is against this stark backdrop that we must view the ways that any new federal national security authorities would be instrumentalized. Adding national security authorities not only fails to recognize the plethora of existing tools available to combat violent white nationalism or hate crimes, but it also ignores the experience of Black, Brown, and Muslim communities who have suffered because of the misapplication of similar national security laws, no matter how well-intentioned. Our nation's long and disturbing history of targeting Black activists, Muslims, Arabs, and movements for social and racial justice has demonstrated that any new authority could be used to expand racial and religious profiling or be wielded to surveil and investigate communities of color and political opponents, all in the name of national security.

Therefore, Congress must change this narrative. It has the tools to do so. With its powerful appropriations power and oversight authority, Congress must demand law enforcement appropriately focus investigative and prosecutorial resources on white nationalist crimes. Federal law criminalizes material support that facilitates the commission of over 50 domestic terrorism-related crimes, including crimes that need not

⁶ International Association of Chiefs of Police and Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, "Action Agenda for Community Organizations and Law Enforcement to Enhance the Response to Hate Crimes", (2019). <https://lawyerscommittee.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/IACP.pdf>.

⁷ Asian Americans Advancing Justice, (2020-2021). <https://www.standagainthatred.org/stories?offset=1595538420174>; see also Stop AAPI Hate. <https://stopaapihate.org/reportsreleases/>.



have a link to international terrorism. Therefore, the Treasury Department can already work with DOJ to investigate financial sources supporting white supremacist violence that falls under any of these predicate offenses.⁸ DOJ also has the authority to investigate and prosecute many other federal statutes relating to hate crimes, organized crime, conspiracy, and violent crimes committed by violent white nationalists.

These existing tools include a statute that criminalizes material support that aids in the commission of any one of 57 previously enacted terrorism-related offenses. As our coalition member The Brennan Center for Justice has detailed, 51 of these statutes, or 89 percent, are applicable to both international and domestic terrorism.⁹ Each of these 51 laws can be independently used to prosecute cases of domestic terrorism, providing numerous options for prosecutors to address these threats.¹⁰ And while the federal government has not used these statutes as much as the threat would warrant, it has already used over a dozen of them in prosecuting multiple domestic terrorism cases, demonstrating that they are, indeed, applicable.¹¹ With respect to organized groups of violent white nationalists, despite their effort to call themselves “militias,” they are, of course, nothing more than violent criminal gangs that can and should be prosecuted as corrupt criminal enterprises. These groups can be dismantled using statutes like the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act. Conspiracy statutes also provide prosecutors with the ability to charge individuals before they successfully complete a hate crime or domestic terrorist attack.¹²

Recommendations

The Jabara-Heyer NO HATE Act is an important first step in enhancing a community-centered response to white nationalist violence in the United States. The Jabara-Heyer Act is named after Khalid Jabara and Heather Heyer, both young people who were murdered in hate crimes perpetrated by violent white supremacists. The people who killed Heather Heyer and Khalid Jabara were convicted of hate crimes, but Heyer and Jabara’s killers were not reported as hate crimes in the FBI’s UCR hate crimes data. The Jabara-Heyer Act would provide important incentives to improve reporting, which will help the Treasury Department in following up on tracing financial ties to those incentives. Importantly, it would also create the opportunity for community-centered restorative practices in some cases, which will lead to greater cooperation between government officials and impacted communities, who are the best sources of information to follow funding leads relating to violent, criminal white nationalist groups.

We also support the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act as it is currently written, without any additional charges or sentencing enhancements. We think this bill could benefit from specifying that it is designed to target white supremacists or white nationalists.

But more must be done. Hate crimes data should be mandated and made publicly available so federal leaders, especially at the Treasury Department, as well as leaders at the state and local level, can address

⁸ The Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 amended to 18 U.S.C. § 2339A

⁹ Michael German and Sara Robinson, “Wrong Priorities on Fighting Terrorism”, Brennan Center for Justice. https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/2019-08/Report_Wrong_Priorities_Terrorism.pdf.

¹⁰ Michael German and Sara Robinson, “Wrong Priorities on Fighting Terrorism”, Brennan Center for Justice. https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/2019-08/Report_Wrong_Priorities_Terrorism.pdf.

¹¹ Michael German and Sara Robinson, “Wrong Priorities on Fighting Terrorism”, Brennan Center for Justice. https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/2019-08/Report_Wrong_Priorities_Terrorism.pdf.

¹² Michael German and Sara Robinson, “Wrong Priorities on Fighting Terrorism”, Brennan Center for Justice. https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/2019-08/Report_Wrong_Priorities_Terrorism.pdf; see also Robert M. Chesney, “Beyond Conspiracy? Anticipatory Prosecution and the Challenge of Unaffiliated Terrorism”, 80 S. Cal. L. Rev. 425, 428, 448–49, 451 (2007).



the threat in a manner best suited to their community. Congress must ensure that the promised transition to the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) by 2021 is actually implemented in coordination with the Treasury Department in order to best follow financial patterns that support white supremacist violent networks. NIBRS is a critical tool for effectively understanding and addressing the rising number of hate crimes in the United States. NIBRS is a more effective data collection system than the current Summary Reporting System (SRS) within the Uniform Crime Report, which studies have shown leads to the underreporting of crimes like hate crimes.¹³

Conclusion

In conclusion, history has taught us that national security laws invariably harm the very communities they are supposed to protect. COINTELPRO, the FBI's unlawful domestic surveillance operation that was shamefully used against Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other civil rights leaders in the 1960s, was justified as a national security program. After 9/11, we have seen a similar counterterrorism framework used to unjustly target and harm Arabs, Muslims, and others treating us and our religion as suspicious.¹⁴ Adding new national security authorities will only exacerbate these challenges.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

¹³ The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, "Comments on the DOJ, FBI, Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Division, Information Collection Request to OMB on the National Incident Based Reporting System", (Nov. 6, 2020). <https://civilrights.org/resource/comments-on-the-doj-fbi-criminal-justice-information-services-cjis-division-information-collection-request-to-the-office-of-management-and-budget-on-the-national-incident-based-reporting-system/>.

¹⁴ Written Statement of Professor Shirin Sinnar, "Countering Domestic Terrorism: Examining the Evolving Threat", Hearing before the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, United States Senate, One Hundred Sixteenth Congress, First Session (September 25, 2019), p. 149. <https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=835354>.

**Testimony of Lecia Brooks
Chief of Staff, Southern Poverty Law Center
before the
Subcommittee on National Security, International Development and Monetary Policy
Committee on Financial Services
United States House of Representatives**

**Dollars against Democracy: Domestic Terrorist Financing in the Aftermath of Insurrection
February 25, 2021**

My name is Lecia Brooks. I am chief of staff of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC).

Now in our 50th year, the SPLC is a catalyst for racial justice in the South and beyond, working in partnership with communities to dismantle white supremacy, strengthen intersectional movements, and advance the human rights of all people. SPLC lawyers have worked to shut down some of the nation's most violent white supremacist groups by winning crushing, multimillion-dollar jury verdicts on behalf of their victims. We have helped dismantle vestiges of Jim Crow, reformed juvenile justice practices, shattered barriers to equality for women, children, the LGBTQ+ community, and the disabled, and worked to protect low-wage immigrant workers from exploitation.

The SPLC began tracking white supremacist activity in the 1980s, during a resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan and other organized extremist hate groups. Today, the SPLC is the premier U.S. nonprofit organization monitoring the activities of domestic hate groups and other extremists. In the early 1990s, the SPLC launched its pioneering Teaching Tolerance program to provide educators with free, anti-bias classroom resources, such as classroom documentaries and lesson plans. Now renamed Learning For Justice, our program reaches millions of schoolchildren with award-winning curricula and other materials that promote understanding of our nation's history and respect for others, helping educators create inclusive, equitable school environments.

The SPLC Action Fund is dedicated to fighting for racial justice alongside impacted communities in pursuit of equity and opportunity for all. Along with our partners at the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), we work primarily in the Southeast United States and have offices in Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Washington, D.C. The SPLC Action Fund promotes policies and laws that will eliminate the structural racism and inequalities that fuel oppression of people of color, immigrants, young people, women, low-income people, and the LGBTQ+ community.

Each year since 1990, we have conducted a census of hate groups operating across the U.S., a list that is used extensively by journalists, law enforcement agencies and scholars, among others. In recent years, we have extensively investigated the use of internet technologies by hate groups and other far-right extremists to recruit young people; to network, build movements and

plan events; to raise funds; and to spread racist propaganda and conspiracy theories that demonize people of color, immigrants, Jews and other perceived enemies.

The violent insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on January 6 should serve as a wake-up call for Congress, the Biden administration, policymakers, internet companies, law enforcement, and public officials at every level. But we have had wake-up calls before – many of them, including Charleston in 2015, Charlottesville in 2017, and Christchurch, New Zealand, and El Paso in 2019. As we all saw last month, we can no longer afford inaction.

My testimony today will focus the state of the radical right today, particularly the white nationalist movement; how far-right extremists are exploiting internet technology to create a broader, more decentralized, and more dangerous movement – one that represents a clear and present danger to national security and our democratic, pluralistic society; how this movement finances itself in this decentralized paradigm; and what steps we must take to confront this threat.

The State of Domestic Extremism Today

The attack on January 6, which was coordinated in part by the Oath Keepers antigovernment militia group and the Proud Boys hate group,¹ was a phenomenon that has been years in the making.

Since the turn of the century, we have documented a sharp uptick in the number of U.S.-based hate groups. In 1999, we counted 457 hate groups. That number more than doubled – to 1,018 – by 2011, two years into the Obama administration. The most important factor driving this increase, in our view, is fear and resentment over the nation's rapidly changing demographics. The U.S. Census has projected that sometime in the 2040s white people will no longer hold a numeric majority in the United States.

After 2011, hate group numbers declined steadily, to a low of 784 by 2014.

Then beginning in 2015, we saw another surge – a 30% cumulative growth over the next four years. That was the year that Donald Trump launched a presidential campaign in which he denigrated Mexicans as “rapists,” criminals and drug dealers while promising to “build a wall” at the southern border to keep immigrants from coming into our country. By 2018, hate groups had risen to a record-high 1,020. We found that white nationalist groups the same year rose by almost 50% – from 100 to 148 – over the previous year.²

Trump has been a tremendous radicalizing force in the U.S. Avowed white supremacists and many other Americans with white supremacist leanings saw him as a champion of their

¹ Jennifer Valentino-DeVries, Denise Lu, Eleanor Lutz, and Alex Leeds Matthews, “A Small Group of Militants’ Outsized Role in the Capitol Attack,” *The New York Times*, Feb. 21, 2021.

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/02/21/us/capitol-riot-attack-militants.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage>

² Heidi Beirich, “The Year in Hate: Rage Against Change,” *Intelligence Report*, Feb. 20, 2019, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2019/year-hate-rage-against-change>.

cause – an avatar for white grievance. Long before he took office, he embraced and helped propagate the kind of false conspiracy theories that animated far-right extremists and helped to push their radical ideologies into the political and media mainstream. He was, for example, the most prominent purveyor of the “birther” myth, that President Barack Obama was born in Kenya and, therefore, not a legitimate president.

His campaign and election electrified the white nationalist movement and other far-right extremists. On August 16, 2016, America’s most prolific conspiracy theorist, Alex Jones said, “It is surreal to talk about issues here on air, and then word-for-word hear Trump say it two days later.”³ Trump was, in fact, a fan of Jones, a man who claimed that the 2012 Sandy Hook massacre of schoolchildren was staged and that the victims and their grieving parents were actors. In December 2015, Trump appeared on Jones’ InfoWars broadcast and declared Jones’ reputation “amazing.” He told the internet fabulist, “I will not let you down. You will be very impressed, I hope, and I think we’ll be speaking a lot.”

After he took office, Trump continued to use his platform to promote the baseless conspiracy theories and fabrications of the radical right, many of them freighted with racial and antisemitic undertones.⁴

Hate group leaders rallied behind the new president. The day after he was elected, Andrew Anglin, founder of the neo-Nazi website Daily Stormer (which takes its name from the German, Nazi-era propaganda sheet known as *Der Stürmer*), posted, “We Won. Our Glorious Leader has ascended to God Emperor. Make no mistake about it: we did this.”⁵ During a gathering just blocks from the White House shortly after the election, white nationalist alt-right leader Richard Spencer – who later played a prominent role in the Charlottesville, Virginia, Unite the Right rally – prompted Sieg Heils from audience members after quoting Nazi propaganda in German. He responded by shouting, “Hail Trump! Hail our people! Hail victory!”⁶ In late January, former Klan leader David Duke tweeted: “everything I’ve been talking about for decades is coming true and the ideas I’ve fought for have won.” He had earlier tweeted that “our people played a HUGE role in electing Trump!”⁷

In office, Trump continued to energize the white nationalist movement through both his words and his policies. He famously insisted there were “very fine people” among the hundreds of neo-Nazis and other white supremacists who marched in the streets of Charlottesville in August 2017, shouting slogans like “Jews will not replace us.”⁸ In 2018, he called Haiti and

³ Tim Murphy, “How Donald Trump Became Conspiracy Theorist in Chief,” *Mother Jones*, Nov./Dec. 2016.

<https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2016/10/trump-infowars-alex-jones-clinton-conspiracy-theories/>.

⁴ Ryan Lenz and Booth Gunter, “100 Days in Trump’s America,” Southern Poverty Law Center, April 27, 2017, <https://www.splcenter.org/20170427/100-days-trumps-america#conspiracy>.

⁵ Andrew Anglin, “We Won,” Daily Stormer, Nov. 9, 2016, <https://dailystormer.eu/we-won/>.

⁶ Joseph Goldstein, “Alt-Right Gathering Exults in Trump Election with Nazi-Era Salute,” *The New York Times*, Nov. 20, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/21/us/alt-right-salutes-donald-trump.html?_r=0.

⁷ David Duke (@DrDavidDuke), Twitter, Nov. 9, 2016, <https://twitter.com/drdauiduke/status/796249464826687488?lang=en>.

⁸ Ashley Parker, “How Trump Has Attempted to Recast His Response to Charlottesville,” *The Washington Post*, May 7, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/how-trump-has-attempted-to-recast-his-response-to-charlottesville/2019/05/06/8c4b7fc2-6b80-11e9-a66d-a82d3f3d96d5_story.html?utm_term=.4d386b48cd27.

majority-black countries in Africa “shithole countries.”⁹ He also implemented draconian policies at the U.S.-Mexico border, separating migrant children from their families, imprisoning tens of thousands of immigrants, and virtually shutting down the asylum system.

As he campaigned for a second term in 2020, Trump continued to encourage the radical right. In a speech in Pittsburgh on September 8, he characterized Black Lives Matter (BLM) activists as “thugs.”¹⁰ During a presidential debate on September 29, he told the Proud Boys – some of whose members are now accused of conspiracy in the January 6 assault on the Capitol – to “stand back and stand by.” And, as the Capitol was being overrun by extremists, he told the mob in a video statement, “We love you. You’re very special.” Later that night, he tweeted, “Remember this day forever!”¹¹

The events of the past year make it abundantly clear that the radical right is highly mobilized, increasingly militant, and oriented toward violence.

Many on the far right hoped the COVID-19 pandemic would create even more economic and political uncertainty – an opportunity, they believed, to capitalize on people’s grievances and drive them toward more extreme political positions.¹² As state officials implemented lockdown measures in early 2020, extremists attended “ReOpen” rallies across the country to further inflame antigovernment sentiment. In April, several hundred protesters – many of them unmasked and armed – invaded the Michigan state capitol to protest the state’s stay-at-home orders. The protests helped build extremist networks. Two men who met at a Lansing demonstration helped design a plot to kidnap Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer. The six men police arrested in October in connection with the plot “practiced assaulting a building in teams and discussed tactics for fighting the governor’s security detail with improvised explosive devices, a projectile launcher, and other weapons,” according to an indictment.¹³

When the BLM movement mobilized millions of people in opposition to racist policing, far-right groups like the Oath Keepers demonized activists as “domestic enemies.” They appeared at protests across the country to patrol the streets. Kyle Rittenhouse, a 17-year-old from Antioch, Illinois, traveled to Kenosha, Wisconsin in August, where he paced the streets with an automatic rifle and allegedly murdered two protesters. He is now hailed as a hero by many far-right extremists. Many on the far right welcomed the rising political tension, which they hoped would lead to violent confrontations with BLM activists, leftists, people of color, and members of law enforcement. The year saw the rise of the “Boogaloo boys,” a movement united in a belief that access to firearms should be completely unregulated and a prediction that the nation is on the

⁹ Eli Watkins and Abby Phillip, “Trump Decrees Immigrants from ‘Shithole Countries’ Coming to US,” *CNN*, January 12, 2018, at <https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/11/politics/immigrants-shithole-countries-trump/index.html>.

¹⁰ Marina Pitofsky, “Trump Rips Black Lives Matter Protesters in Pittsburgh: ‘Thugs!’,” *The Hill*, Sept. 8, 2020, <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/515414-trump-rips-black-lives-matter-protesters-in-pittsburgh-thugs>.

¹¹ Amy Sherman, “A Timeline of What Trump Said Before Jan. 6 Capitol Riot,” *PolitiFact*, <https://www.politifact.com/article/2021/jan/11/timeline-what-trump-said-jan-6-capitol-riot/>.

¹² Cassie Miller, “White Supremacists See Coronavirus as an Opportunity,” *Hatewatch*, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2020/03/26/white-supremacists-see-coronavirus-opportunity>.

¹³ John Flesher, “6 Men Indicted in Alleged Plot to Kidnap Michigan Governor,” *Associated Press*, Dec. 17, 2020, <https://apnews.com/article/gretchen-whitmer-michigan-indictments-coronavirus-pandemic-traverse-city-10f7e02c57004da9843f89650edd4510>.

precipice of “the boogaloo,” a term used to refer to a second civil war. Three members of the movement face state terrorism charges and federal conspiracy charges after law enforcement foiled a plot to spark violence at a BLM rally in Nevada last May.¹⁴ Another member of the movement was charged in June in the murders of a federal security officer in Oakland and a Santa Cruz County sheriff’s deputy in two separate attacks.¹⁵

The Internet and Decentralization: How extremists are exploiting internet technology to create a broader, more loosely affiliated movement

The recent drop in the number of hate groups should not be taken as a sign of declining strength within their movement – or in the threat this movement poses. The fact is, the proliferation of numerous internet platforms has allowed individuals to engage with potentially violent movements like QAnon and Boogaloo without being card-carrying members of a particular group. While some of these platforms either cater to extremists or engage in limited content moderation, it is important to recognize that these groups have benefited tremendously from their time on mainstream social media sites as well. This phenomenon has blurred the boundaries of hate groups and far-right ideologies, helping coalesce a broader but more loosely affiliated movement of white nationalists and other far-right extremists who reject the country’s democratic institutions and pluralistic society. It signals a shift in the movement away from structured groups and toward diffuse extremist communities.

Trump undoubtedly emboldened the white nationalist movement. But nothing has helped facilitate the process of connecting far-right extremists to one another like the internet. Long before Trump entered office, white supremacists around the world began constructing a robust, online ecosystem that indoctrinates people – especially young white men – into the world of hate. The dramatic rise in white nationalist hate groups and white supremacist killers in recent years is a testament to its effectiveness. Indeed, in the manifesto he posted online prior to murdering 51 Muslim worshipers in Christchurch, New Zealand, in March 2019, the killer posed a question to himself: “From where did you receive/research/develop your beliefs?” He answered thusly: “The internet, of course. You will not find the truth anywhere else.”

The Christchurch killer’s online radicalization narrative is now a terrifyingly common one. Before the days of the internet, far-right extremists typically had to publish and disseminate propaganda in printed form. Most Americans were simply never exposed to this material. Now, white nationalists commonly develop their views by coming into contact with extremist content online – either on social media or other sites that are fine-tuned to encourage young men to

¹⁴ Jack Date, “Feds Charge 3 Self-Identified ‘Boogaloo’ Adherents Plotting Violence at Black Lives Matter Protest,” *ABC News*, June 3, 2020, <https://abcnews.go.com/ABCNews/feds-charge-identified-boogaloo-adherents-plotting-violence-black/story?id=71059377>.

¹⁵ Richard Winton, Maura Dolan, and Anita Chabria, “Far-Right ‘Boogaloo Boys’ Linked to Killing of California Law Officers and Other Violence,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 17, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-06-17/far-right-boogaloo-boys-linked-to-killing-of-california-lawmen-other-violence>.

blame their real and perceived grievances on racial and religious minorities, immigrants, women, and others.

The shift toward decentralization of the movement is recent and partially a response to the tactics employed by those working to counter the far right. Antifascists, journalists, researchers, and law enforcement have infiltrated groups that recruited online, gathered in online group-chatting platforms like Wire, Discord, Matrix, or Telegram, or met in real life – leading to exposure, embarrassing leaks, and prosecutions. Leaders of groups that helped to plan and facilitate the white supremacist Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville are still entangled in lawsuits thanks to these actions. As a result, extremist leaders have become increasingly wary of the traditional group organizing style. A number of arrests, including members of white power groups including The Base and Atomwaffen Division, have further discouraged extremists from joining groups. “There is no reason to have a flag or a name. That’s putting a target on your back for the system,” the administrator of an “accelerationist”¹⁶ Telegram channel wrote in July 2020 after police arrested a Virginia man for posting stickers promoting The Right Stuff, a white nationalist group. “That’s how you get infiltrated and set up for RICO or worse. Dont [sic] join groups. Stop making it easy for the enemy to hunt you down and lock you up.”¹⁷

Decentralization has also been driven by a wave of “deplatforming” – a term used to refer to the actions taken by tech companies to prevent an individual or group from using their internet products. Individual far-right extremists, ranging from neo-Nazis and white nationalists to QAnon supporters, have found themselves locked out of major social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube as a result of these efforts.

As extremists were booted off major tech platforms and social media sites after Charlottesville, a slew of new services arose. These companies, often referred to as “alt tech,” are not simply alternatives to mainstream sites. Rather, their platforms are often governed by minimalist terms-of-service agreements, crafted by individuals committed to limited intervention, and built with decentralized technologies, such as cryptocurrency, in mind. Some of the lesser-known platforms sought to mimic more mainstream ones and have become alternatives to social media sites such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. There were also companies that sought to provide the basic digital infrastructure, such as hosting, that some Unite the Right organizers lost after the riot. “We need parallel everything. I do not want to ever have to spend a single dollar at a non-movement business,” wrote Pax Dickinson, a far-right activist and founder of a now-defunct fundraising platform catering to right-wing extremists, on Twitter in June 2017.

Parts of this “parallel” web were short-lived and have been taken offline. Still others, such as Gab, have continued on. Indeed, Gab has been home to a range of far-right extremists,

¹⁶ Within the radical right, accelerationism refers to the strategy of using violence to bring about the collapse of the political and economic order, leading to the end of a multicultural, democratic society. See Cassie Miller, “At the End of the Trump Era, White Nationalists Increasingly Embrace Political Violence,” *The Year in Hate and Extremism*, Southern Poverty Law Center, Feb. 16, 2021. <https://www.splcenter.org/news/2021/02/16/end-trump-era-white-nationalists-increasingly-embrace-political-violence>.

¹⁷ Cassie Miller and Hannah Gais, “Capitol Insurrection Shows How Trends on the Far-right’s Fringe Have Become Mainstream,” *Hatewatch*, January 22, 2021. <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2021/01/22/capitol-insurrection-shows-how-trends-far-rights-fringe-have-become-mainstream>.

including Robert Bowers, who has been charged in the 2018 massacre of 11 people and the wounding of six others at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh.

Successive waves of deplatforming have contributed to an ever-fluctuating and growing alt-tech landscape. As mainstream tech companies have expanded their crackdown to include QAnon, militias, and other assorted far-right groups, an array of new “clones” of mainstream social media sites have gained traction. Today, far-right users can choose from a variety of platforms where content moderation is limited. Users who have been deplatformed from Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube can find safe haven at a growing constellation of sites with names like MeWe, Rumble, Minds, Bitchute, CloutHub, and Parler.

In the aftermath of the January 6 insurrection, as *The Guardian* and others reported, some of these sites rose quickly to the top of both Apple’s app store and Google Play’s most downloaded apps list. One exception was Parler, a social media platform partially funded by conservative megadonor Rebekah Mercer. Parler was removed from both the Apple and Google app stores in the days following the attack after numerous outlets, including the SPLC, reported on the central role the site played in promoting and coordinating the insurrection.¹⁸

These efforts have also contributed to the push to spawn alternative technologies, such as hosting services that could provide a home not just for websites trafficking in hate, but also entire social media platforms. Epik, for example, is a domain name registrar and hosting service founded in 2009. The company has come to support large swaths of the far-right web. Its roster of clients includes Gab and Parler, as well as a number of prominent hate and conspiracy websites.

Such developments have not been limited to parallel infrastructure. Far-right extremists have seized upon new technologies – especially encrypted, decentralized, and peer-to-peer services – to organize, spread propaganda, and recruit new members.

As the SPLC noted in our *Year in Hate and Extremism 2020* report, far-right extremists’ reliance on some of these platforms for recruiting, organizing, and propagandizing is profound.¹⁹ Unlike the clones of mainstream social media sites that cater either explicitly or implicitly to extremists, the user base of these encrypted and decentralized technologies is far more diverse.

The popular encrypted messaging app known as Telegram has become a favorite of neo-Nazis, white nationalists, and other far-right extremists, due in part to its limited content moderation policies. Telegram offers a one-stop shop for extremists. Its file storage features allow them to store and share massive libraries of multimedia propaganda, including livestreams of white supremacist terrorists, such as the perpetrators of the 2019 terrorist attack in Christchurch, New Zealand, and Halle, Germany, that had been removed from other platforms. Meanwhile, its public facing channels allow extremists to blast propaganda, while its private chats provide a space for them to chat and plan. Using bots, Telegram has now expanded its

¹⁸ Hannah Gais, “Has Accountability for Big Tech Come Too Late?,” Southern Poverty Law Center, Feb. 16, 2021, <https://www.splcenter.org/news/2021/02/16/has-accountability-big-tech-come-too-late>.

¹⁹ “The Year in Hate and Extremism 2020,” Southern Poverty Law Center, Feb. 1, 2021, <https://www.splcenter.org/year-hate-and-extremism-2020>.

services to allow in-app purchases as well, thereby allowing users to pay for goods and services from within the app.

The use, or rather abuse, of these encrypted apps is not an indictment of encryption but of poor moderation. Millions of average Americans use encrypted technologies to communicate. Major human rights organizations, such as Human Rights Watch²⁰ and Amnesty International²¹, have cited encryption as crucial to protecting the rights of all people in the digital age. People living under both democratic and repressive regimes use encrypted technologies to communicate and exchange information while preserving their privacy.

These structural transformations affecting the radical right have also worked hand-in-glove with a reimagining of far-right extremists' goals. After Unite the Right, white nationalists and neo-Nazis who were no longer satisfied with trying to attain their goals through traditional political channels turned toward explicitly violent and revolutionary means. As a result, the mobilization and collective organizing on display in Charlottesville gave way to a more radical cohort of fascists. This cadre turned to neo-Nazi polemics – such as James Mason's "Siege," which espouses the benefits of leaderless, cell-structured terrorism – for guidance. They encouraged terrorism and insurrectionary violence, seizing upon the motto in online forums that "there is no political solution." This strand of the far right gathers on largely unmoderated social media platforms, where they have built diffuse, leaderless extremist communities. Telegram is their platform of choice, and they have harnessed its public channels and large file-sharing abilities.

The belief that "political solutions" are no longer viable has burrowed deeply into the political right, especially since Trump's election loss. The former president told his followers that he was their sole representative in the halls of power. With Trump's loss in the presidential race, which many of his followers erroneously believed was the result of election fraud, many on the right have lost faith in the political system and democracy itself. In this landscape – to them – intimidation, force, and violence seem like increasingly appropriate political tools.

This militant and violence-oriented political bloc is helped immeasurably by the growth of alternative social media platforms, including Telegram, that have lax or nonexistent content moderation policies.

The Funding of Hate: How domestic extremists are raising money

The funding and financing of hate groups in this increasingly decentralized landscape is also changing in important ways.

²⁰ Kenneth Roth, "The Battle Over Encryption and What It Means for Our Privacy," Human Rights Watch, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/06/28/battle-over-encryption-and-what-it-means-our-privacy>.

²¹ "Easy Guide to Encryption and Why It Matters," Amnesty International, Oct. 21, 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2016/10/easy-guide-to-encryption-and-why-it-matters/>.

In the past, hate groups raised money by charging dues, selling products, or requiring the purchase of uniforms. These funds were then used to pay for the distribution of propaganda and more recruitment materials. Anti-government groups such as the Oath Keepers still use this model; the group has thousands of dues-paying members, including those arrested for their role in the January 6 insurrection.

Today, some white power groups and personalities are raising funds through the distribution of propaganda itself. The solicitation of donations during live video streaming, for example, is emerging as a major source of revenue for some of these groups. This “monetized propaganda” is particularly concerning in online environments because the audiences are large, anonymous, and geographically dispersed.

New internet platforms not only allow extremists to spread propaganda, gain followers, and build their personal profiles, but to monetize hateful and dangerous content, crowdfund to support their activities, and turn hate into profitable full-time jobs. Indeed, crowdfunding and online content monetization allowed the extremists behind the Stop the Steal movement to make anti-democratic organizing their livelihood. Ali Alexander has relied on sites like GiveSendGo to fund his activities. Nick Fuentes has long earned his income from monetizing livestreams on YouTube and DLive. Vincent James Foxx of Red Elephants has used the same livestreaming platforms, as well as the mobile payment service Cashapp and content monetization platform SubscribeStar. Some extremists who stormed the Capitol actually made money from their activities. Tim Gionet, a longtime far-right personality who streams under the moniker “Baked Alaska” and who was arrested for his role in the Capitol riot, made roughly \$2,000 from his January 6 livestream, while his followers commented, “HANG ALL CONGRESSMEN.”

In November, SPLC researchers reported on the alarming amount of money that hate groups and far-right extremists were earning using a popular livestreaming platform called DLive.²² Our reporting showed that dozens of extremist figures were each earning thousands of dollars per month on the service. As the post-election period became dominated by Trump’s false assertion that the election was fraudulent, these DLive streamers shifted to video streaming at in-person events branded with the slogan “Stop the Steal.” Not surprisingly, boosted by this new mission and purpose, streaming donations shot through the roof, and some DLive streamers received nearly \$44,000 from donations during November and December alone. Some of those same individuals ended up being featured by House impeachment managers as key perpetrators of the violence on January 6²³ when they once again used DLive to livestream the events inside the Capitol and on the grounds.²⁴

Even when mainstream social media companies block extremists from using their services to finance their operations, the decentralized technology landscape too often fills the

²² Hannah Gais and Michael Edison Hayden, “Extremists are Cashing in on a Youth-Targeted Gaming Website,” Hatewatch, Southern Poverty Law Center, Nov. 17, 2020.

<https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2020/11/17/extremists-are-cashing-youth-targeted-gaming-website>

²³ Transcript of Feb. 11, 2021, U.S. House impeachment proceedings, CNN,

<http://www.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/2102/11/se.06.html>.

²⁴ Michael Edison Hayden, “Meet DLive: The Livestreaming Platform Used by Trump’s Capitol Insurgents,” Hatewatch, Southern Poverty Law Center, Jan. 7, 2021. <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2021/01/07/meet-dlive-livestreaming-platform-used-trumps-capitol-insurrectionists>.

gap. YouTube, for example, has many such deplatforming strategies at its disposal, including account time-outs, removal of chat features, and disallowing bad actors to take donations or profit from advertising revenue. However, some newer, smaller companies have seen a market in re-monetizing and re-platforming such groups. The Entropy suite of services from Cthonic Software, for example, allows extremists who have been de-monetized on YouTube to embed their video streams on its site instead. It takes a smaller percentage of the cut from donations and provides a “censorship-free” (read: free-for-all) chat service. It currently provides chat and financing services to numerous radical right video streamers, including many of the ones who had been banned previously for inciting violence and engaging in hateful conduct on more mainstream services.

Crowdfunding is also being exploited by hate groups to earn money in this new decentralized landscape. It allows extremists to fund travel to attend demonstrations, purchase “protective gear” and weapons, and raise legal defense funds. Extremists and their supporters post crowdfunding campaigns across social media sites, reaching a wide audience and, in some cases, raising hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The initial wave of alt-tech clones developed after Unite the Right in 2017 also included alternatives to popular online fundraising platforms. Instead of Patreon, a crowdfunding site popular with artists, journalists, musicians, and other creators, extremists could use sites like Hatrean, a crowdfunding site founded by antigovernment extremist Cody Wilson.²⁵ WeSearchr, a site founded by far-right extremist and Holocaust denier Charles C. Johnson, helped white nationalists, neo-Nazis, and other extremists by providing a service similar to the more project-oriented crowdfunding site Kickstarter.²⁶

Crowdfunding sites can also act as a buffer between extremists and banks or online payment systems, allowing them to use their services even if they have been banned. For example, PayPal banned the Proud Boys from using its services in late 2018 after members of the group assaulted a group of antifascist activists in New York City.²⁷ However, members of the group were able to use the crowdfunding site GiveSendGo, which calls itself a “Christian fundraising site” – and which used PayPal as its payment processor – in the leadup to the siege at the Capitol. PayPal terminated GiveSendGo’s account in the aftermath of the January 6 attack, but the damage was already done.²⁸ The example demonstrates how crowdfunding sites can help

²⁵ “Cody Rutledge Wilson,” Extremist Files, Southern Poverty Law Center. <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/cody-rutledge-wilson>.

²⁶ Luke O’Brien, “The Making of an American Nazi,” *The Atlantic*, Dec. 2017. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/12/the-making-of-an-american-nazi/544119/>; Michelle Castillo, “The Far Right Uses this Site to Fund its Favorite Causes – and its Founder Hopes to Build a ‘Very Profitable Business,’” *CNBC*, June 24, 2017, <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/06/24/wesearchr-charles-johnson-alt-right-causes.html>; Michael Edison Hayden, “Donald Trump Jr. Pictured at ‘We Build the Wall’ Event with Neo-Nazi Collaborator Jack Posobiec,” *Hatewatch*, Southern Poverty Law Center, Aug. 24, 2020, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2020/08/24/donald-trump-jr-pictured-we-build-wall-event-neo-nazi-collaborator-jack-posobiec>.

²⁷ Colin Lecher, “PayPal is Canceling Accounts Used by the Proud Boys, Gavin McInnes, and Antifa Groups,” *The Verge*, Nov. 9, 2018, <https://www.theverge.com/2018/11/9/18079880/paypal-proud-boys-gavin-mcinnis-antifa>.

²⁸ Alexis Benveniste, “PayPal Ditches Christian Crowdfunding Site Used by Proud Boys,” *CNN Business*, Jan. 12, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/12/business/paypal-proud-boys-crowdfunding-trend/index.html>.

to remonetize an extremist group or individual even after they have been banned from payment processors or banking services for violating terms of service agreements.

Crowdfunding sites played a critical role in the Capitol insurrection, providing monetary support that allowed people to travel to Washington, D.C. BuzzFeed identified more than a dozen GoFundMe campaigns looking to cover travel expenses for the January 6 rally. One campaign, which promised to “build an army to march into DC,” raised \$21,548 from nearly 300 donors.²⁹ GiveSendGo hosted “more than two dozen fundraisers related to protesting the outcome of the presidential election, raising travel funds to attend the January 6 protest in Washington and other right-wing causes,” according to a CNN review.³⁰ Ali Alexander, who organized the Stop the Steal movement, started a fundraiser on the site on January 12, 2021, to build a “security and administrative team,” amassing more than \$30,000 from 332 donors. “You are a threat to the powerful. We need you to help save the republic,” one donor posted on the site.³¹

GiveFundGo has provided hundreds of thousands of dollars to extremists’ legal defense funds. The site raised more than \$500,000 for Kyle Rittenhouse, the 17-year-old charged with murdering two protesters at a BLM demonstration in Kenosha, Wisconsin.³² After Proud Boys leader Enrique Tarrio, along with other members of the group, destroyed two BLM signs that belonged to historic black churches at a Stop the Steal protest in Washington, D.C., in December, the site raised more than \$100,000 to fund his legal defense.³³

These are just a few examples of the online campaigns that have collectively raised millions to fund extremism. A platform created by American Wolf, an Olympia, Washington-based armed far-right group, is currently hosting a campaign for Alan Swinney, a Proud Boys member with a long history of violence who is facing charges for allegedly shooting protesters with a paintball gun, spraying another with mace, and drawing a firearm during demonstrations in Portland over the summer. Bellingcat, an online investigative site, uncovered videos of Swinney discussing his activities at demonstrations, including one in which he describes how he wants to raise funds to buy bear mace and distribute it to his compatriots in order to attack antifascists. In one video, he says, “People like knowing that something they donated for is the reason why those Antifa are laying on the ground and choking. They get a lot of satisfaction knowing they were responsible for that pain. There’s not too many places where you can donate

²⁹ Vanessa Wong, “Trump Supporters Used GoFundMe to Get to DC – Now the Pages Have Been Removed,” *BuzzFeed News*, Jan. 8, 2021, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/venessawong/trump-gofundme-dc-january-6>.

³⁰ Majlie de Puy Kamp and Scott Glover, “Right-Wing Extremists and Their Supporters Use Christian Website to Raise Funds,” *CNN*, Jan. 20, 2021, <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/01/19/us/give-send-go-extremism-invs/index.html>.

³¹ “Protection and Team for Ali Alexander,” GiveSendGo, <https://www.givesendgo.com/ali>.

³² Kaelan Deese, “Christian Crowdfunding Site Raises \$500K for Rittenhouse Legal Defense,” *The Hill*, Sept. 29, 2020, <https://thehill.com/homenews/state-watch/518752-christian-crowdfunding-site-raises-500k-for-rittenhouse-legal-defense>.

³³ Cassie Miller, “Proud Boys Destroy Churches’ Black Lives Matter Signs During Protest in Washington, D.C.” *Hatewatch*, Southern Poverty Law Center, Dec. 16, 2020, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2020/12/16/proud-boys-destroy-churches-black-lives-matter-signs-during-protest-washington-dc>; Roxanne Stone, “‘Christian’ Crowdfunder Hosts Campaigns for Tarrio and Other Proud Boys,” *Religion News Service*, Jan. 5, 2021, <https://religionnews.com/2021/01/05/christian-crowdfunding-site-give-send-go-hosts-multiple-proud-boys-campaigns-including-for-leader-enrique-tarrio/>.

and Antifa will directly feel it.” He has raised roughly \$1,500 on American Wolf’s crowdfunding platform.³⁴

We are concerned that the monetization of propaganda through single platform micro-donations provides extremists and their supporters a “one-stop shop” for financing hate, and without oversight the companies providing these services will continue to profit from it.

Another example of how decentralization is changing hate group financing is the continued proliferation of cryptocurrencies, and changes in behavior when using cryptocurrencies. Not only are groups and individuals involved in the hate landscape readily adopting cryptocurrencies, but they are implementing techniques to use cryptocurrencies covertly.

In terms of tracking this threat, we are particularly concerned about the volume of cryptocurrency data and the velocity of its growth, both of which present a challenge. Being able to track cryptocurrency use by hate groups today requires more technical expertise than it did several years ago. Not only is the number of coins needed to be tracked increasing, but the number of transactions is increasing. The increase in the number of transactions is partially due to an increased user base, and partially due to the proliferation of mixing services designed to obscure donation trails. In addition to mixing services, U.S.-based hate groups and extremists have also started using other obfuscation techniques previously tested by foreign terror organizations.³⁵ An example of this is the neo-Nazi National Justice Party’s acceptance of money through dynamically generated Bitcoin addresses rather than static addresses. Relatedly, the Daily Stormer has recently decided that concerns about anonymity justified switching to “privacy coin” Monero rather than staying with Bitcoin³⁶, even though the latter is more familiar to its users.³⁷

Separating hate groups from their online funding sources will prevent their ideas from reaching a wider audience, and it will disrupt their networks. Some technology companies have taken steps in the right direction, but both government and internet companies must do far more to combat extremism and hate.

Policy Recommendations

The values that drive our financial policy recommendations are based on respect for human rights and an expectation that people deserve:

³⁴ Alan Swinney, “Official Alan Swinney Financial Support,” American Wolf, <https://funding.americanwolf689.org/product/alan-swinney/>.

³⁵ U.S. Department of Justice press release, “Global Disruption of Three Terror Finance Cyber-Enabled Campaigns,” Aug. 13, 2020, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/global-disruption-three-terror-finance-cyber-enabled-campaigns>.

³⁶ Michael Edison Hayden, “White Supremacists are Investing in a Cryptocurrency That Promises to Be Completely Untraceable,” *Newsweek*, March 27, 2018, <https://www.newsweek.com/white-supremacists-cryptocurrency-monero-bitcoin-861104>.

³⁷ Andrew Anglin, “They’re Getting Weird With This ‘Bitcoin Tracking’ Stuff,” *Daily Stormer*, Jan. 16, 2021, <https://dailystormer.su/theyre-getting-weird-with-this-bitcoin-tracking-stuff/>.

- a. protection from harms online,
- b. freedom of legal expression and access to commerce online, and
- c. transparency in decision-making by governments and technology companies.

Recommendations for Tech Companies

1. Most tech companies have their own Terms of Service, essentially rules of the road. The SPLC encourages corporations to create – and enforce – policies and terms of service to ensure that social media platforms, payment service providers, and other internet-based services do not provide platforms where hateful activities and extremism can grow and lead to domestic terrorism.
2. When tech companies do decide to act against hate, it is too often only after a violent attack has occurred. They need to proactively address the problem of extremist content on their platforms rather than simply react after people have been killed. Tech companies must commit to **being proactive in taking financial harms seriously**. Terrorists and hate groups using their platforms to raise money is a serious problem that is causing real harms to real people. Companies should commit to **regular outside audits** to measure the financial harms caused by their platforms. These audits should also include an evaluation of how their systems are being abused, whether their Terms of Service are being enforced equally, and so on. Critically, the companies must commit to hearing – and acting on – the results of these audits.
3. Tech companies of all sizes should **coordinate** to understand how the impact of one company's actions affects the others. For example, when one platform removes a problematic individual, group, or network, what happens then? The troublemaker goes to another platform and continues their bad behavior. Company A washes its hands of the matter, but the problem is simply transferred to Company B. Companies must coordinate to **anticipate and measure this phenomenon** as it happens. This must be done within and across sectors – banking companies, social media companies, device manufacturers, infrastructure providers – and should include both large and small companies.
4. Tech companies must understand and **appreciate their unique position** as the single largest storehouses of human knowledge about complex socio-technical problems, including terrorist funding. Tech companies store vast quantities of invaluable, irreplaceable data, and currently they are the sole arbiters of who gets to use that data and for what purpose. Tech companies should be encouraged and rewarded for **using their data for good**. They should proactively engage outside research partners to put their vast quantities of data to work to understand terrorist funding. These efforts must go beyond just providing pre-curated data sets to the same preferred university partners.
5. Tech companies must **redesign their “Trust and Safety” systems** to reward people who want to do the right thing. Why does it take 10 clicks to report content on Platform X? Why does Platform X remove content when a journalist questions them but not when Sally from Indianapolis clicks the “flag” button? Just as tech companies have “bug bounty” programs to allow outside cybersecurity researchers to get paid for reporting software flaws, people who point out platform weaknesses should be rewarded, not

punished or ignored. At the same time, services must not solely rely on users to report content. Small companies should be financially rewarded for building powerful, proactive teams that keep their services safe and abuse-free.

Recommendations for the Biden Administration and Congress

1. **Words matter.** It is impossible to overstate the importance of civic and military leaders using their public platforms and bully pulpits to condemn hate and extremism. Failure to do so emboldens extremists – as we saw dramatically demonstrated during the Trump administration. There is an urgent need for governors, mayors, police executives, and federal, state, and local legislators to speak out – and to act – against bias-motivated criminal activity and violent extremism.
2. Government should require regular, mandatory reporting by technology service providers to document abuse of their systems including financial support of violence, harassment, and terrorism.
 - a) This includes implementation of **mandatory financial abuse reporting requirements** for internet services operating in the United States, including social media services, infrastructure providers, banking institutions, cryptocurrency exchanges, crowdfunding sites, gaming sites, video streaming platforms, and the like.
 - b) These reporting requirements should extend to entities providing **any financial services** – whether profit-making or not, virtual currency-based, cryptocurrency-based, decentralized, or otherwise.
 - c) Internet services should be required to investigate and report the details of harms and abuse of their service. There should be **support** provided to smaller companies to do this work, and **penalties** applied to services that refuse these tracking and reporting responsibilities.
 - d) Penalties and support should be proportional to the size and capabilities of each service. Critically, small and not-for-profit services should be afforded financial and operational assistance in tracking, reporting, and remediating the financial harms perpetuated by their platforms.
3. Government should **invest in basic and applied research.** Many thorny issues – such as how financial exploitation can be tracked on encrypted platforms, for example, or how cryptocurrency transactions can be tracked at scale – may have technology-based solutions.
 - a. We urge lawmakers to **prioritize funding programs for research into technologies that can be used to detect and prevent online financial harms** while preserving human rights.

- b. This is especially critical as we anticipate a gradual move to a more decentralized technology landscape that, as we discussed earlier, presents many more challenges for tracking and stopping financial abuse.
 - c. Government should ensure better training at the state and local levels to better enable detection of fraud that could have federal implications.
4. Government should **increase the number and quality of cryptocurrency data sources** available for public consumption and analysis. For example, the FRED data service currently only includes exchange rates and only for five cryptocurrencies. What if FRED included transaction data, information about ownership of mixing services and wallet companies, and mining and visualization tools as well? The FRED cryptocurrency exchange data was initially obtained from Coinbase, and this new data could be similarly acquired from private industry if necessary
5. There should be a government-wide initiative to share and coordinate data on cryptocurrency, which is made a priority by nominating a high-level position and coordination center, at the NSC and with Treasury, to function as a central coordination node.
6. Congress should **enact the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act**, which would establish offices within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Department of Justice, and the FBI to monitor, investigate, and prosecute cases of domestic terrorism – and require these offices to regularly report to Congress. Passed overwhelmingly by the House of Representatives last September, this legislation would also provide resources to strengthen partnerships with state and local law enforcement authorities to confront far-right extremism and create an interagency task force to explore white supremacist activities within the U.S. armed services and federal law enforcement.
7. Congress should **reject efforts to create a new criminal domestic terrorism statute** – or the creation of a listing of designated domestic terrorist organizations. A new federal domestic terrorism statute or list would adversely impact civil liberties and could be used to expand racial profiling or be wielded to surveil and investigate communities of color and political opponents in the name of national security.
8. The Biden administration and Congress should make concerted efforts to **improve federal hate crime data collection, training, and prevention**. Data drives policy. We cannot address what we are not accurately measuring. The FBI's annual Hate Crime Statistics Act (HCSA) report is the best national snapshot of hate violence in America, but data received from the 18,000 federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies is vastly underreported – in part because reporting is not mandatory. In 2019 (the most recent report), 86% of police agencies either affirmatively reported that they had zero hate crimes or did not report any data to the FBI at all.

Congress should mandate hate crime data reporting. Meanwhile, Congress should enact the Khalid Jabara and Heather Heyer National Opposition to Hate, Assault, and Threats

to Equality Act of 2019 (NO HATE Act), which would authorize incentive grants to spark improved local and state hate crime training and data collection initiatives, as well as state-based hotlines to connect victims with support services.

9. Government should **promote anti-bias education programs that help steer individuals away from hate and extremism.** The law is a blunt instrument to confront hate and extremism; it is much better to prevent these criminal acts in the first place. Since it is not possible to legislate, regulate, or tabulate racism, hatred, or extremism out of existence, we need federal and state government leadership to promote anti-bias, anti-hate, and democracy-building education programs – such as the SPLC’s Learning for Justice resources – in our nation’s schools. Especially in these divided and polarized times, every elementary and secondary school should promote an inclusive school climate and activities that celebrate our nation’s diversity.

Programs and processes that intervene ethically in the lives of individuals – often called “deradicalization” efforts – should also be promoted. More than 70 million children and young adults, for example, have been learning primarily at home. They experienced a summer vacation with no camps, employment, or other structured activities. Extremists and hate groups see this as an ideal time to exploit youth grievances about their lack of agency, their families’ economic distress, and their intense sense of disorientation, confusion, fear, and anxiety. In the absence of their usual social support systems and networks of trusted adults and peers, young people can become targets of far-right extremists, who promise easy answers online about who they can blame for their plight.

Last June, the SPLC and American University’s Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab (PERIL)³⁸ released a guide to help parents and caregivers understand how extremists are exploiting this time of uncertainty and unrest by targeting children and young adults with propaganda. The guide, *Building Resilience & Confronting Risk in the COVID-19 Era*,³⁹ is designed for caregivers, parents, educators, and others who are on the front lines of recognizing and responding to radicalization in the COVID-19 era. Our new SPLC/PERIL guide provides parents and caregivers with tangible steps to confront and counter this threat.

Thank you for holding this important hearing. We deeply appreciate the Subcommittee’s continued leadership in working to address the financing of domestic terrorism and extremism in a constitutional and effective manner. We look forward to working with you as you continue to focus your urgent attention on this important issue.

³⁸ Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab (PERIL), American University, <https://www.american.edu/centers/university-excellence/peril.cfm>.

³⁹ “Building Resilience & Confronting Risk in the COVID-19 Era: A Parents & Caregivers Guide to Online Radicalization,” Southern Poverty Law Center/American University’s Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab (PERIL), https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/splc_peril_covid_parents_guide_jan_2021_1.pdf.

CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY: VALENS GLOBAL

House Committee on Financial Services

Subcommittee on National Security, International Development, and Monetary Policy

Dollars against Democracy:

Domestic Terrorist Financing in the Aftermath of Insurrection

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Chairman Himes, Ranking Member Hill, and distinguished Members of the subcommittee: On behalf of Valens Global, it is an honor to appear before you to discuss domestic violent extremism and the threat it poses to our country. My testimony examines the current domestic violent extremism landscape and explores what can be done to mitigate this threat, particularly from a financial perspective.

The Department of Homeland Security's October 2020 *Homeland Threat Assessment* states that, among domestic violent extremists, "racially and ethnically motivated violent extremists—specifically white supremacist extremists (WSEs)—will remain the most persistent and lethal threat in the Homeland."¹ The threat has been made clear through repeated lethal acts perpetrated by WSEs. The most prominent and deadly of these recent attacks was an August 2019 mass shooting at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, that killed 22, making it the third deadliest domestic extremist attack in 50 years.² Beyond lone acts of terrorism, organized networks such as Atomwaffen Division and The Base are dedicated to overthrowing the U.S. government and bringing about race war.

The attack on Capitol Hill on January 6, 2021, cast a spotlight on the WSE movement, as some people associated with WSE groups were involved, and some white power symbols were displayed. Prominent among these symbols was a now-infamous "Camp Auschwitz" sweatshirt.³ Though the events of January 6 should not be over-interpreted as driven by WSEs—multiple protesters, grievances, and belief systems were involved—the insurrection spoke to how WSEs can exploit our fractured political environment.

More generally, in 2020-21, there has been discernible movement throughout the United States toward armed politics and violent activism, in which multiple factions and movements resorted to violence or the threat of violence to pursue their objectives. The country witnessed scenes it had previously not seen for decades, such as armed citizens patrolling the streets in Georgia, Kentucky, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and other places.⁴ The involvement of WSEs in the Capitol Hill attack and other events during this tumultuous national period points to their ability to exploit societal fractures and the general rise in extremism.

This move toward armed politics raises the risk of an uptick in extremism-related violence across the political spectrum. At worst, the divisions we now face could plunge the United States into conflict and civil war or fragmentation. Even if this country does not descend into civil war—which is surely

¹ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, "Homeland Threat Assessment October 2020," October 2020, pages 17-18. This testimony employs the term *white supremacist extremism* because this terminology is consistent with that currently employed by the U.S. government. Scholars and analysts employ various other terms to define the movement. Of particular note is Kathleen Belew's advocacy of the term *white power*. See Kathleen Belew, *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), page ix.

² Mark Pitcavage, "Murder and Extremism in the United States in 2019," Anti-Defamation League, 2020, page 15. (<https://www.adl.org/media/14107/download>) The two attacks that Pitcavage identifies as deadliest are the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing and Omar Mateen's 2016 attack at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando.

³ A.C. Thompson and Ford Fischer, "Members of Several Well-Known Hate Groups Identified at Capitol Riot," PBS, January 9, 2021; Mallory Simon & Sara Sidner, "Decoding the Extremist Symbols and Groups at the Capitol Hill Insurrection," CNN, January 11, 2021.

⁴ Benjamin Fearnow, "Armed Black Militia Challenges White Nationalists at Georgia's Stone Mountain Park," *Newsweek*, July 5, 2020; Ryan Van Velzer, Jess Clark & Kate Howard, "Three Injured by Gunfire During Black Militia Demonstration," *WFLA News*, July 25, 2020; Jared Goyette, "Citizen Patrols Organize Across Minneapolis as Confidence in the Police Force Plummets," *Washington Post*, June 7, 2020; Stephen Montemayor, "Inside Minnesota's Boogaloo Movement: Armed and Eager for Societal Collapse," *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis), July 18, 2020.

a maximalist outcome—there remain many potential negative outcomes for a nation in the throes of extremism and armed politics that would result in greater loss of life. It is therefore helpful to view the current domestic violent extremism landscape in part through the lens of counterinsurgency. As we confront the possibility of growing violence and division, *it is important to thin the pool of potential recruits who can be drawn upon by nefarious actors*. This lens influences my policy prescriptions, which are designed to empower authorities to disrupt bad actors while at the same time being protective of civil liberties and avoiding stigmatization that can increase violent extremists' pool of potential recruits.

The first portion of my testimony is designed to provide an overview of the current WSE threat landscape. It addresses key WSE ideologies, major domestic and foreign WSE groups, the nature of the WSE threat in the United States, and transnational WSE activity. I then transition to exploring a different part of the domestic extremist spectrum, looking at militant anarchist and anti-fascist groups. Militant anarchists and anti-fascists see themselves as responding to an oppressive state and the rise of fascist organizing. They see themselves as willing to meet violence with violence. I include these groups in the report not because they pose an equivalent threat to militant WSEs—individuals and groups affiliated with the WSE movement pose an unambiguously greater danger today—but because they illustrate the nationwide move toward armed politics, which occasions mutual fears and recriminations. While militant anti-fascists and anarchists view themselves as the protectors of marginalized communities, other militant actors see anarchist and anti-fascist groups as the aggressors to whom *they* are responding. Further, when fashioning policy solutions to violent extremist threats, it is important to ensure that these solutions are neutral with respect to ideology. Discussion of the militant anarchist and anti-fascist movement will help us to contextualize how the policy recommendations in this testimony might apply across a range of movements. I conclude with a set of policy recommendations.

I should caution at the outset that the universe of domestic violent extremist actors is large, regionally varied, and constantly in flux. That being said, this testimony should provide a solid foundation for understanding the threat as it exists today, how it is likely to evolve, and how to combat it.

WSE Ideologies: Global Trends

Global WSE movements are bound by shared ideologies, which generally emphasize a belief in the necessity of white power and the superiority of the white race, and are often driven by fears of cultural and ethnic extinction, irrelevance, or subjugation. Many WSE leaders explicitly call for violence against the movement's enemies, arguing that violent activism is necessary, and characterizing likeminded but nonviolent groups as weak and unable to create social change. Other WSE leaders and groups view public association with violence as a threat to their ability to operate, fearing that it will attract the interest of law enforcement, interfere with their ability to recruit and retain members, and hamper their fundraising efforts. Some leaders and groups officially disavow the use of violence but tolerate, tacitly accept, or are unable to control its use by group members.

The transnational character of WSE ideologies is evident in the manifestos and social media posts of WSE terrorists who have carried out prominent recent attacks. Brenton Tarrant attacked two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, in a mass shooting on March 15, 2019, killing 51. Before the shooting, he posted a manifesto to the web forum *8chan*, in which he cited Anders Breivik (perpetrator of the 2011 attacks in Norway that claimed 77 lives) as an inspiration, along with Dylann Roof (perpetrator of the 2015 shooting at a black church in South Carolina, in which nine people died) and other WSE

perpetrators of mass attacks.⁵ John T. Earnest also published a letter to *8chan* before launching an April 2019 attack on the Chabad of Poway synagogue in Poway, California, which claimed one life and injured three people. In the letter, Earnest claimed inspiration from the actions and manifesto of Brenton Tarrant.⁶ Patrick Crusius published his own manifesto to *8chan* with a similar reference to Brenton Tarrant before carrying out the aforementioned August 2019 shooting at an El Paso Walmart. Crusius wrote: “In general, I support the Christchurch shooter and his manifesto. This attack is a response to the Hispanic invasion of Texas.”⁷ A shooter who attacked a mosque in Bærum, Norway, in August 2019 posted on social media that he was directly inspired by Brenton Tarrant, and also praised Patrick Crusius’s attack.⁸



Anders Breivik, left, and Dylann Roof, center, were cited in the manifesto of Brenton Tarrant, right.

These examples illustrate two central dynamics of the contemporary WSE movement. First, it is transnational. Terrorists and other attackers motivated by WSE beliefs draw inspiration from attacks across the globe. Second, online discourse, particularly on social media, cements successful attackers as movement heroes. The most prominent killers are routinely described as “saints” in online forums, with accompanying iconography underscoring this depiction. As part of the movement’s effort to lionize Tarrant, his manifesto has been translated into several European languages and widely distributed, along with footage from his livestreamed attack.⁹ A bound edition of a Ukrainian translation has been printed and sold in Eastern Europe.¹⁰ This constitutes a deliberate effort to sacralize Tarrant and his attack and to convince others to follow his example.



Brenton Tarrant was subsequently cited in the manifestoes of both John T. Earnest, center, and Patrick Crusius, right.

⁵ Brenton Tarrant, “The Great Replacement: Towards a New Society We March Ever Forwards,” distributed via Twitter, 8Chan, and email, March 15, 2019. As further background on the previous attackers whom Tarrant praised, Anders Breivik bombed a government complex in Oslo, Norway, and attacked a youth camp affiliated with Norway’s Labor Party on Utoya Island on July 22, 2011, killing 77. Before the attack, Breivik published a 1,518-page manifesto decrying the “Islamisation” of Europe. He pinned the blame for this phenomenon on multiculturalism, political correctness, and left-wing political leaders. Anders Breivik, manifesto, 2038: *A European Declaration of Independence* (independently published, 2011). Dylann Roof attacked the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. His writings, both before and after the attack, show that he was motivated by the belief that the growth of non-white groups in America would do great harm to the white race. Dylann Roof, Manifesto [labeled “Text”], *The Last Rhodesian*, archived June 20, 2015; Dylann Roof, “Dylann Roof Jailhouse Journal,” published by *The Post and Courier* (Charleston, S.C.), January 5, 2017.

⁶ John T. Earnest, manifesto, “An Open Letter,” April 27, 2019. (Available via SITE Intelligence Group)

⁷ Patrick Crusius, manifesto entitled “The Inconvenient Truth,” *8Chan*, August 3, 2019. (Available via SITE Intelligence Group)

⁸ Jason Burke, “Norway mosque attack suspect ‘inspired by Christchurch and El Paso shootings,’” *The Guardian* (U.K.), August 11, 2019. (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/11/norway-mosque-attack-suspect-may-have-been-inspired-by-christchurch-and-el-paso-shootings>)

⁹ See discussion in “Social Media Account Disseminates Translations of Christchurch Manifesto, Livestream,” SITE Intelligence Group, February 5, 2020.

¹⁰ “The Russians and Ukrainians Translating the Christchurch Shooter’s Manifesto,” *Bellingcat*, August 14, 2019.

Despite a generally shared canonization of its “saints,” the transnational WSE movement is not an ideological monolith. WSE groups, while existing within the same broad ideological milieu, can differ from their counterparts in various ways, which are summarized in the following graphic:

Major WSE Ideologies



Neo-Nazi and National Socialist Beliefs

Neo-Nazi, national socialist, and fascist ideologies are a core component of the WSE movement, though not all WSE groups adhere to fascist beliefs, and many even eschew overt connections with the Third Reich’s symbology or ideas. Neo-Nazi and fascist groups espouse core beliefs derived from Third Reich ideology, including emphasizing racial and cultural purity, scapegoating Jewish people, subscribing to exterminationism, and espousing devotion to the establishment of an ethnic homeland.

White Genocide and the Great Replacement

The belief in an ongoing *white genocide*, or *great replacement* of white European-origin populations by non-white immigrants, is widespread among WSEs and the broader white power movement. It perceives

an existential threat from non-white immigration, multiculturalism, and associated trends. Groups adhering to this belief typically point to 1) patterns of mass migration into Western countries, 2) the low birth rates of European-origin families compared to the high birth rates of immigrants from non-European states, and 3) perceived cultural destruction at the hands of immigrants. Renaud Camus's *The Great Replacement*, published in 2012, popularized this idea in Europe.¹¹ Other iterations of these beliefs employ anti-Semitic conspiracy theories to explain the forces driving the purported white genocide. Some WSEs argue that a Jewish conspiracy rules the United States through a shadowy "Zionist occupational government" (frequently abbreviated ZOG) that seeks to eliminate the white population via immigration, race mixing, and cultural destruction.¹²

These theories have become an important component of many transnational WSE groups and attackers, including attacks perpetrated by Anders Breivik, Dylann Roof, Brenton Tarrant, John Earnest, Patrick Crusius, and Robert Bowers. Numerous groups that do not employ violence and generally confine their activities to the political sphere, such as the "Identitarian" movement, also embrace such ideas, though in a less extreme manner. One should not assume that an individual who harbors concerns centered on demographics or white ethnic marginalization will have a greater proclivity for violence or criminality.

Accelerationism

Accelerationism is the most inherently violent ideology circulating in the global WSE community. There are various non-WSE forms of accelerationism, and WSE groups subscribing to accelerationism generally fuse it with at least one other WSE ideology, such as neo-Nazism. Nonetheless, given the violence associated with WSE accelerationist groups, it is worth treating this idea in some detail.

WSE accelerationists believe that a race war is not only inevitable but also the only path to achieving white power. They believe that only a violent, revolutionary overthrow of the "System," and victory in the subsequent civil war, can achieve the white power movement's goals.¹³ WSE accelerationists typically emphasize the importance of "leaderless resistance," calling on individuals or small cells to perpetrate revolutionary acts of violence without centralized leadership. The purpose of such attacks is to force the white population to recognize its enemy, join a revolutionary uprising, and destroy the System.¹⁴ This style of organization is intended to be resistant to law enforcement infiltration.¹⁵

WSE accelerationists are influenced by a shared corpus of texts, disseminated through internet fora and other channels of communication.¹⁶ The ideology is clearest in James Mason's *Siege*, which draws on Charles Manson, Adolf Hitler, and prominent American neo-Nazi author William Pierce to promulgate an accelerationist worldview called "Universal Order."¹⁷ *Siege* was originally a series of newsletters authored by Mason for the National Socialist Liberation Front beginning in 1980. He

¹¹ While Renaud Camus's theories have been explicitly and repeatedly cited as a motivating force by WSE terrorists, Camus does not advocate violence, and has expressly denounced the WSE movement.

¹² See, for example, David Lane, "White Genocide Manifesto," *Der Brüder Schweigen Archives & David Eden Lane's Pyramid Prophecy*, archived May 21, 2020.

¹³ See, for example, James Mason, *Siege* (ironmarch.org, 2015), pages 31-33 and 59.

¹⁴ James Mason, *Siege* (ironmarch.org, 2015), pages 53-55.

¹⁵ This facet of leaderless resistance can be discerned in the seminal essay on the topic by theorist Louis Beam, a Vietnam veteran who became a major Ku Klux Klan leader upon his return from Southeast Asia. Louis Beam, "Leaderless Resistance," *The Seditiousist*, February 1992. See also Mason, *Siege*, pages 91-92 and 505.

¹⁶ The specific communications channels used by WSE accelerationists shift frequently, as internet service providers and other companies frequently deny movement adherents' access.

¹⁷ Mason, *Siege*, pages 34-37 and 228.

continued publishing the newsletters after the Front collapsed in 1982, printing them through 1986. Mason collected these writings into a single book in 1992, which today is a defining text of major WSE accelerationist groups. Potential recruits into groups such as Atomwaffen Division and The Base are instructed to read the book.¹⁸ William Pierce's dystopian and ultraviolent novel *The Turner Diaries* is also a guiding text.¹⁹

WSE accelerationism's call for armed resistance and hastening of society's collapse into civil war has produced violent results. The manifestos of both Brenton Tarrant and John Earnest espouse key concepts of WSE accelerationism in describing their motivations or calling for further action.²⁰ Law enforcement has foiled other plots by WSE accelerationists.²¹

WSE accelerationists often organize into small cells, as called for by the concept of leaderless resistance, to minimize government infiltration and facilitate direct action over a wider geographic area.²² Cells often facilitate activities such as physical exercise and paramilitary training. An example of this small-cell model is Der Harte Kern, a small cell in Germany with transnational connections and WSE accelerationist beliefs, which planned attacks on 10 mosques in 10 different German states, with the goal of provoking retaliatory attacks and triggering a civil war.²³

White Power Skinheads

White power skinheads are a violent, racist iteration of the British skinhead subculture that emerged in the 1960s.²⁴ The global white power skinhead community holds few consistent political beliefs in common. The movement is heavily influenced by national socialism, though many white power skinheads may embrace the aesthetics, underlying racism, and calls to violence of the historical movement rather than its formal political ideology.²⁵ White power skinhead groups are defined by their embrace of racism and usually emphasize working-class empowerment, "traditional" masculinity (including homophobia), and a "straight edge" culture (with "hostility to any form of drug-taking—except tobacco and alcohol").²⁶ Violence is a key component of white power skinhead subculture.

¹⁸ "Prominent American Neo-Nazi Terror Group Establishes Official Communication Platform, Posts Evidence of Flying Campaigns," SITE Intelligence Group, November 8, 2019.

¹⁹ For an extended treatment of *The Turner Diaries* and other works of racist dystopian fiction, see J.M. Berger, *The Turner Legacy: The Storied Origins and Enduring Impact of White Nationalism's Deadly Bible* (The Hague: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague, 2016).

²⁰ See Tarrant, "The Great Replacement" (in a section titled "Destabilization and Accelerationism," Tarrant urges that "stability and comfort are the enemies of revolutionary change.... We must destabilize and discomfort society where ever possible"); Earnest, "An Open Letter" (proclaiming that "The Day of the Rope [a reference to violent fictional events in *The Turner Diaries*] is here right now—that is if you have the gnads to keep the ball rolling").

²¹ See, for example, U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Nevada, press release, "Las Vegas Man Pleads Guilty to Possession of Bomb-Making Components," February 10, 2020.

²² Both AWD and The Base are organized using this structure. See, for example, A.C. Thompson, Ali Winston & Jake Hanrahan, "California Murder Suspect Said to Have Trained with Extremist Hate Group," *ProPublica*, January 26, 2018; Ryan Thorpe, "Homegrown Hate," *Winnipeg Free Press* (Canada), August 16, 2019.

²³ Group members were arrested in February 2020 before they could carry out the attacks. "German far-right group 'planned attacks on mosques,'" *BBC* (U.K.), February 17, 2020. (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-51526357>)

²⁴ The term *skinhead* alone does not imply that an individual or group has an affiliation with white power or national socialism. The subculture originated as a multiethnic phenomenon among both native-born and immigrant British working-class youths. A movement of anti-racist skinheads, sometimes referred to as Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice, or SHARP, seeks to reject racist elements of the subculture today.

²⁵ John Pollard, "Skinhead Culture: The Ideologies, Mythologies, Religions and Conspiracy Theories of Racist Skinheads," *Patterns of Prejudice*, Volume 50, Issue 4-5, 2016, page 406. (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0031322X.2016.1243349>)

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pages 402-403 and 406-407.

Accordingly, street fighting is a core cultural element of American and European white power skinhead crews.²⁷

While white power skinhead violence is a persistent criminal threat, it is usually limited to street brawls and targeted assaults. While they are the exception rather than the rule, there have been notable instances in which white power skinheads engaged in terrorism and political assassinations. These include Wade Michael Page's 2012 attack on a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, which claimed six lives, and Revolution Chemnitz's plots against German politicians and civil servants, which authorities uncovered and thwarted in 2018.²⁸

White Nationalism and White Separatism

While many WSE movements emphasize a global white racial identity and the establishment of white power worldwide, white nationalist and separatist groups seek the creation of a white nation in a particular geographic area. Groups with these beliefs usually draw on a cultural history tied to a particular region or state and emphasize the importance of their perceived home region over national or transnational political order. The envisioned fate of non-white residents of these homelands varies, with options generally ranging from the subjugation of non-white individuals under white power to the total exclusion of non-white individuals through ethnic cleansing or forced migration. While many white nationalist and separatist groups refrain from using or explicitly advocating violence, others, including those discussed below, are willing to employ or encourage violence.

White nationalist and separatist ideologies are not inherently transnational, as their emphasis on a specific geographic area may limit the desirability of cooperation with foreign WSE groups. For example, ultranationalist Ukrainian WSE groups share significant ideological overlap with ultranationalist Russian WSE groups through shared beliefs in white power, but their commitments to the territorial integrity and power of their respective homelands, coupled in many cases with direct participation on opposite sides of the Ukrainian separatist conflict, leaves little room for cooperation. However, specific white nationalist and white separatist groups may have transnational aspirations or view themselves as part of a global movement. For example, the League of the South, a neo-Confederate movement in the American South, promotes the secession of former Confederate states, but also networks with foreign white power groups.²⁹

Major Domestic and Foreign Groups

Neo-Nazi and National Socialist Groups

National Socialist Movement. This group advocates for the establishment of national socialism in the United States.³⁰ Though the National Socialist Movement officially disavows the use of violence, it has previously called for the forceful removal of all non-whites from U.S. territory.³¹ An individual

²⁷ Ibid., page 403.

²⁸ See "Profile: Wisconsin Sikh temple shooter Wade Michael Page," *BBC* (U.K.), August 7, 2012; Andreas Burger, "Germany uncovers terrorist group which attacked foreigners in Chemnitz," *Reuters*, October 1, 2018.

²⁹ See Michael Hill, "League Rep Meets with Suidlanders in South Africa," *League of the South*, January 3, 2019.

³⁰ "About Us," National Socialist Movement, archived June 21, 2020.

³¹ Compare the National Socialist Movement's "Commanders Desk," which states that "Acts of Violence & Terrorism are Dishonorable & will Not be Tolerated!" with the group's "25 Points of American National Socialism," which states that "we demand that all non-Whites currently residing in America be required to leave the nation forthwith and return to their land of origin: peacefully or by force." "Commanders Desk," National Socialist Movement, archived August 3, 2020; "25 Points of American National Socialism," National Socialist Movement, archived November 27, 2012.

affiliated with the group attempted to derail an Amtrak train and attack black passengers on board in 2017.³²

National Action. National Action was a relatively small (estimated 100 to 200 core activists) U.K.-based group that advocated for national socialism. Britain added the group to its list of proscribed terrorist organizations in December 2016.³³ Its members continued to organize under various aliases after the group was banned, including Scottish Dawn, NS131, and the System Resistance Network. British authorities proscribed all of them.³⁴ The group's multiple attempts to subvert the ban suggest that members will continue to try to convene covertly.

Accelerationist Groups

Atomwaffen Division (AWD).³⁵ AWD is a WSE group with an international membership that seems to have emerged in 2015 from the now-defunct internet forum Iron March, though AWD's founder claims the group was organized several years prior. AWD is organized into cells that appear to operate with a high degree of independence.³⁶ The organization has explicitly violent aims and seeks to



Logos of WSE accelerationist groups: the Sonnenrand or Black Sun of the Sonnenkrieg Division (left); the logo of the Feuerkrieg Division (top right); and the logo of The Base (bottom right).

³² Plea Agreement, *United States v. Wilson*, 18 CR 3005 (D. Neb., July 12, 2018). (https://www.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.ned.78514/gov.uscourts.ned.78514.27.0_1.pdf)

³³ "Far-right group National Action to be banned under terror laws," BBC (U.K.), December 12, 2016.

³⁴ See, for example, "Two neo-Nazi groups added to banned list," BBC (U.K.), September 28, 2017. (<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-41430740>); "Extremist neo-Nazi group to be banned under terror laws," BBC (U.K.), February 24, 2020. (<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-51618248>)

³⁵ In March 2020, Atomwaffen Division's ideological figurehead James Mason announced that the group was "officially" disbanded. For discussion of Mason's announcement, see "As Atomwaffen Division Disbands, European Branch Announces It Will 'Remain Active,'" SITE Intelligence Group, March 17, 2020. On July 25, an author posted a blog entry on *The American Futurist*—a neo-Nazi blog that promotes the ideas of James Mason—claiming that a new group known as the National Socialist Order "is founded and led by the remaining leadership of the Atomwaffen division," and that it would carry on Atomwaffen's program "to build an Aryan, National Socialist world by any means necessary." See "National Socialist Order Announcement," *The American Futurist*, July 25, 2020. This attempted rebranding of AWD under a new name followed the arrest of several prominent Atomwaffen members. Despite the attempted rebranding, this testimony continues to use the name Atomwaffen Division or AWD for three reasons. First, militant groups attempt to rebrand constantly, and it is not always clear that a new name will stick. Second, the name Atomwaffen Division continues to be used internationally by ideologically-aligned groups. Third, the name Atomwaffen Division continues to be used in reporting on the group.

³⁶ Cells and individual members have been identified in several U.S. states and European countries. See, for example, Affidavit in Support of Criminal Complaint, *United States v. Russell*, 17 CR 0283 (M.D. Fla., May 20, 2017); A.C. Thompson et al., "Inside Atomwaffen As It Celebrates a Member for Allegedly Killing a Gay Jewish College Student," *ProPublica*, February 23, 2018; Maik Baumgärtner et al., "Neo-Nazi 'Atomwaffen Division' Spreads Fear in Germany," *Der Spiegel* (Germany), November 13, 2019.

instigate a race war that will lead to the destruction of the U.S. political system. That being said, the specific ideas and ideologies of AWD's members vary somewhat, as the "leaderless" model that the group follows makes it difficult for AWD to craft as cohesive an outlook as some other militant groups. However, AWD members have repeatedly showed their commitment to advancing societal breakdown through violence. Their forums and chat groups circulate a core set of texts, most prominently Mason's *Siege*.³⁷ AWD has inspired a number of related organizations with which it sometimes shares membership, including Feuerkrieg Division and Sonnenkrieg Division, which this testimony discusses subsequently.

AWD is primarily active in the United States. Since the group's formation, AWD members have been identified in several states. The group's social media and propaganda output reveals that it has held paramilitary training camps in Texas, Nevada, Illinois, and Washington.³⁸ These camps feature live-fire weapons training and firearms instruction, as well as hand-to-hand combat training, instruction in survival skills, and physical fitness activities.

Group members have plotted or discussed terrorist attacks. One cell in Florida acquired explosive materials and may have intended to target the electrical grid or a nuclear power plant.³⁹ Other activities by AWD members include the murder of a gay Jewish college student in California and an intimidation campaign targeting journalists and political figures.⁴⁰

In addition to its activity in the United States, AWD appears to have a presence in Germany and members in Canada.⁴¹ U.S.-based members have reportedly traveled to England, Poland, the Czech Republic, Ukraine, and Germany.⁴²

Sonnenkrieg Division. Sonnenkrieg Division is an AWD-inspired, U.K.-based WSE group that shares AWD's accelerationist ideology, including its commitment to violence. Members have distributed propaganda encouraging terrorist attacks and have acquired bombmaking instructions. Like AWD, Sonnenkrieg's members have advocated online for mass violence. Its membership includes former members of National Action, the previously discussed neo-Nazi organization currently banned in the United Kingdom. In February 2020, Britain's home secretary announced that Sonnenkrieg would also be banned as a terrorist group.⁴³ In private forums, Sonnenkrieg members have discussed traveling to

³⁷ A now-defunct iteration of the group's website provided a list of texts explaining its ideology. These works included *Siege* and *Mein Kampf*, as well as a work posted to an online neo-Nazi web zine that describes the necessity of violence for bringing down the System. See "Reading List," Atomwaffen Division, archived February 12, 2018; Max Macro, "Violence," blog entry, *Rape Culture*, March 6, 2017.

³⁸ See A.C. Thompson et al., "California Murder Suspect Said to Have Trained With Extremist Hate Group," *ProPublica*, January 26, 2018; A.C. Thompson et al., "Inside Atomwaffen As It Celebrates a Member for Allegedly Killing a Gay Jewish College Student," *ProPublica*, February 23, 2018; Affidavit in Support of Criminal Complaint, *United States v. Russell*, 17 CR 0283 (M.D. Fla., May 20, 2017). (<https://www.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.flmd.337844.1.0.pdf>)

³⁹ Dan Sullivan, "National Guard 'neo-Nazi' aimed to hit Miami nuclear plant, roommate says," *Tampa Bay Times*, June 13, 2017.

⁴⁰ A.C. Thompson, Ali Winston and Jake Hanrahan, "California Murder Suspect Said to Have Trained With Extremist Hate Group," *ProPublica*, January 26, 2018; U.S. Department of Justice, press release, "Arrests in Four States of Racially Motivated Violent Extremists Targeting Journalists and Activists," February 26, 2020.

⁴¹ See Mack Lamoureux and Ben Makuch, "An American Neo-Nazi Group Has Dark Plans for Canada," *Vice*, July 10, 2018. (https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/ev847a/an-american-neo-nazi-group-has-dark-plans-for-canada)

⁴² Maik Baumgärtner et al., "Neo-Nazi 'Atomwaffen Division' Spreads Fear in Germany," *Der Spiegel* (Germany), November 13, 2019.

⁴³ Jamie Grierson, "UK to ban neo-Nazi Sonnenkrieg Division as a terrorist group," *The Guardian* (U.K.), February 24, 2020. (<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/feb/24/uk-ban-neo-nazi-sonnenkrieg-division-terrorist-group>)

the United States to meet with members of AWD.

Feuerkrieg Division (FKD). Feuerkrieg Division is an AWD-inspired group founded in the Baltics, with purported members in several European countries and a U.S. presence.⁴⁴ The group's propaganda reveals that FKD, like AWD and Sonnenkrieg, explicitly embraces violence to bring about a race war. FKD has been implicated in terrorist attacks and plots in the United States and Europe. The scope of the group's U.S. presence is unclear from open sources. However, Conor Climo, a Las Vegas resident convicted of possession of an unregistered firearm after being found with bomb-making materials in his home, "was communicating with individuals who identified with the white supremacist extremist group Feuerkrieg Division" while discussing attacks on Jewish and LGBT targets in Las Vegas and conducting surveillance in support of potential plots.⁴⁵

The Base. Organized in 2018 by an individual who refers to himself as "Norman Spear" and "Roman Wolf," The Base is a U.S.-based WSE group with international membership. Spear formed the group with a similar goal to that of AWD's founders: preparing adherents of WSE ideology to commit acts of terrorism and participate in an anticipated civil war. While Spear has attempted to publicly disavow violence—describing The Base as a "survivalism & self-defense network"—he has acknowledged that members of his group are "militant" and seek to foment an insurgency. Spear has also tacitly justified the use of terrorism to achieve his movement's goals. For example, he commented in a June 2018 Gab post: "It's only terrorism if we lose—If we win, we get statues of us put up in parks."⁴⁶

The majority of the group's activity takes place in the United States, where cells and individual members have been identified in Maryland, Georgia, New Jersey, Michigan, and Wisconsin. The group has held paramilitary "hate" camps in Georgia and elsewhere in the United States, and has reportedly sought to hold similar camps in Canada.⁴⁷

Members explicitly advocate mass violence in their online communications. While The Base has not successfully executed a terrorist attack, members from Maryland and Canada were indicted in January 2020 in connection with a plot to stage an attack at a gun rights rally in Richmond, Virginia.⁴⁸ Three other members were charged the same month in Georgia with conspiracy to commit murder based on a plot to kill anti-fascist activists, while other members of the group have been charged for vandalizing synagogues in Michigan and Wisconsin.

⁴⁴ For examples of local activity, see "Neo-Nazi Group Announces 'Florida Cell Activism,' Calls for New Recruits," SITE Intelligence Group, October 1, 2019; "Neo-Nazi Group Conducts Postering Campaign in Philadelphia," SITE Intelligence Group, October 1, 2019; "Neo-Nazi Group Announces Meetup in the United Kingdom," SITE Intelligence Group, January 8, 2020; "Offshoot of Neo-Nazi Group Shares Violent Propaganda and Attempts Recruitment," SITE Intelligence Group, December 19, 2018; "Neo-Nazi Group Posts Flyers with Violent Incitement in Netherlands," SITE Intelligence Group, December 30, 2019.

⁴⁵ U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Nevada, press release, "Las Vegas Man Pleads Guilty to Possession of Bomb-Making Components," February 10, 2020.

⁴⁶ Quoted in "The Base," Anti-Defamation League, accessed November 3, 2020, (<https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/the-base>).

⁴⁷ Ryan Thorpe, "Homegrown Hate," *Winnipeg Free Press* (Canada), August 16, 2019, (<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/homegrown-hate-547510902.html>); affidavit in support of the arrest warrant for Luke Austin Lane, Floyd County Police Department, published as part of the press release "Three Men Charged with Murder Conspiracy, Anti-Government Activity," January 19, 2020, (<https://boydcountypolicedept.files.wordpress.com/2020/01/media-release-affidavit.pdf>).

⁴⁸ U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Maryland, press release, "Three Alleged Members of the Violent Extremist Group 'The Base' Facing Federal Firearms and Alien-Related Charges," January 16, 2020.

White Nationalist and White Separatist Groups

In the United States, militant white nationalists and white separatists organize around one of two aims: the replacement of the current U.S. government with a white-dominated regime or the creation of a new white state within the geographic United States. The most notable group in the former category is Patriot Front, which seeks to transform the country into a white ethno-state. In contrast to explicitly violent groups, and despite a shared origin with AWD that traces back to Iron March, Patriot Front eschews overt violence, perhaps to make its ideology more palatable.⁴⁹ The group has relied on predominantly nonviolent demonstrations to draw attention to its movement. However, Patriot Front selectively targets its ideological foes—including anarchists and other left-wing activists—with intimidation and threats of violence.

The factions of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) currently active in the United States are not as large or well-organized as earlier iterations of the Klan, but the current movement continues to advocate for white power. Most contemporary KKK factions typically refrain from violence. But some, particularly the Loyal White Knights, the largest Klan group in the United States, have repeatedly threatened violence against non-whites, and individual group members have plotted terrorist attacks.⁵⁰

Few significant white separatist WSE groups currently exist in the United States. The most prominent is the League of the South, though its ability to operate has been limited by its public involvement in violent clashes at the 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, as well as by the increasingly militant statements of its leadership. Its recent activity has consisted of participation in protests and demonstrations. While these activities have been mostly peaceful, several members have been arrested or convicted of violence at these events.⁵¹

In Europe, one of the most salient militant transnational white nationalist groups is the Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM). NRM is a Sweden-based group that advocates for a halt to non-white immigration to Nordic countries and, subscribing to a pan-Nordic ideology, favors the creation of a single Nordic nation.⁵² The group has tried to organize as a political party in Sweden.⁵³ NRM also has offshoots in Norway, Finland, Iceland, and Denmark, though Finland officially banned it. Members have been involved in bombings, as well as street brawls with opposition groups.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Carol Schaeffer and Fritz Zimmermann, "They Are Racist; Some of Them Have Guns. Inside the White Supremacist Group Hiding in Plain Sight," *ProPublica*, November 8, 2019.

⁵⁰ For example, see Jason Rantala and Neal Bennett, "KKK Flyers Threatening to Beat Black Men Who 'Make Eyes' at White Girls Show Up in Jax Neighborhood," *First Coast News* (Jacksonville, Fla.), October 9, 2017; Chris Barker, "Ilia Calderón Comes Face to Face with Hate in Interview with KKK Leader," *Aquí y Ahora*, Univision, August 22, 2017; U.S. Department of Justice, press release, "New York Man Sentenced to 30 Years for Plot to Kill Muslims," December 19, 2016. (<https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/new-york-man-sentenced-30-years-plot-kill-muslims>)

⁵¹ Ian Shapira, "Ex-white nationalist found guilty in beating of black man in Charlottesville parking garage," *The Washington Post*, February 8, 2019; Jerry Iannelli and Isabella Vi Gomes, "White Supremacist Arrested for Charging Crowd at Hollywood Confederate Street-Name Protest," *Miami New Times*, August 30, 2017. (<https://www.miaminewtimes.com/news/white-supremacist-arrested-at-hollywood-florida-confederate-street-sign-protest-9631690>)

⁵² "Our Path," Nordic Resistance Movement, November 17, 2018.

⁵³ "What is the Nordic Resistance Movement," Nordic Resistance Movement, March 8, 2019.

⁵⁴ See Daniel Dickson and Johan Sennero, "Three Swedish men get jail for bomb attacks on asylum centers," Reuters, July 7, 2017; "Kärntorp clashes: Four neo-Nazis jailed," *The Local* (Sweden), June 5, 2014. (<https://www.thelocal.se/20140605/karntorp-clashes-four-neo-nazis-jailed>)

White Power Skinheads

Major transnational white power skinhead groups include the British-origin Blood & Honour (B&H), the affiliated Combat 18 (C18), and the U.S.-origin Hammerskins. B&H originated as a loose association of white power music groups and affiliated racist skinheads in Britain in the 1980s.⁵⁵ While expanding into an international movement, the group splintered several times. B&H now claims affiliates throughout Europe, the Americas, Australia, and New Zealand.⁵⁶ Several countries have proscribed the group, including Germany, Spain, Russia, and, most recently, Canada.

C18 is closely tied to B&H and is sometimes described as its armed wing.⁵⁷ The *18* in the group's name is an overt reference to Adolf Hitler, as *A* is the first letter of the alphabet while *H* is the eighth. C18 has been tied to murders and firebombings in North America and Europe, among other acts of violence.⁵⁸ The group purports to have no official leadership structure, saying that it adheres to a leaderless resistance model.⁵⁹



Logo of a U.S.-origin skinhead group, the Hammerskins.

In contrast to the loose structure initially adopted by B&H, the Hammerskins originated as a nationwide umbrella for U.S. skinhead groups. While the primary central organization, Hammerskin Nation, is now defunct, Hammerskins chapters continue to operate throughout the United States, and there is at least one annual national event, a music festival known as Hammerfest.⁶⁰ The current level of organization beyond local chapters is unclear, as skinhead activity primarily takes place underground and two of the major public websites associated with the Hammerskins are now defunct. Hammerskins crews have also been established in Europe and Australia. Supporting organizations affiliated with Hammerskins crews and made up of prospective members go by the name Crew 38.⁶¹ The rest of the skinhead movement in the United

States is organized primarily into small regional and community groups: Past regional and national-level organizations, including the Vinlanders Social Club and the Blood and Honour Council (also known as the Council of 28), do not appear to be active. However, white power record labels and inter-group associations help bind the current movement together.

U.S.-based racist skinhead groups have served as a source of recruits for more organized WSE groups, including the Rise Above Movement (RAM), which has drawn recruits from Hammerskins factions. RAM has established itself as an independent WSE group. While it has shed some of the overt cultural

⁵⁵ "History," *Blood & Honour Worldwide*, archived August 7, 2020.

⁵⁶ See the organization's website for a list of current chapters. "B&H Worldwide Contacts," *Blood & Honour Worldwide*, archived October 28, 2020.

⁵⁷ See "Listed Terrorist Entities: Currently Listed Entities," Public Safety Canada, accessed November 3, 2020 (describing C18 as B&H's "armed branch"); Ben Knight, "Combat 18: The neo-Nazi network facing a ban in Germany," *DW* (Germany), July 5, 2019. (<https://www.dw.com/en/combat-18-the-neo-nazi-network-facing-a-ban-in-germany/a-49493000>)

⁵⁸ These violent crimes are discussed in "Listed Terrorist Entities: Currently Listed Entities," Public Safety Canada, accessed November 3, 2020. (<https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/nml-scr/cntr-trcrsm/lstd-ntts/crmt-lstd-ntts-en.aspx#50>)

⁵⁹ Discussed in "Combat 18," Blood & Honour Canada, archived June 21, 2019 ("Combat 18 is the leaderless resistance. This means that there are no members, no rosters and no orders to be passed down.").

⁶⁰ The most recent identified iteration of this event was hosted in Southern California in October 2018. Birthrite, *Facebook*, May 9, 2018.

⁶¹ Discussed in Vegas Tenold, *Everything You Love Will Burn* (New York: Nation Books, 2018), pages 178-80.

markers of the WSE skinhead movement, RAM maintains the movement's emphasis on street violence, participating in numerous brawls during political protests in its place of origin, California, and elsewhere in the United States.⁶² RAM emphasizes physical fitness and martial arts, emphasizes designed to prepare its members to use violence against opponents. The group relies on this focus and its affiliated clothing brand, The Right Brand, to gain a broader following within the white power movement.⁶³ RAM has sought to establish international ties. In spring 2018, members of the group's leadership traveled to Italy, Germany, and Ukraine to establish connections with a variety of European groups, including the Ukraine-based Azov Battalion (which is discussed in further detail in this testimony's "Foreign Fighters and the Ukrainian and Russian Nexus" section).⁶⁴ More recently, RAM may have rebranded, seemingly changing its name to Revolt Through Tradition.

Domestic Activities

Violent Activity

American WSE groups are divided over the use of violence. While some view terrorism and mass killings as essential tools for achieving their goals, others are more commonly implicated in unplanned assaults and murders.⁶⁵ Still others view overt violence as a potential threat to the movement's growth.

Most of the successful WSE terrorist attacks in the United States have been perpetrated by lone attackers such as Robert Bowers, Patrick Crusius, John Earnest, and Dylann Roof, though several disrupted plots have involved small cells. The groups most closely associated with these plots include AWD, its offshoots, and The Base. WSE groups have also perpetrated murders and assaults, generally motivated by the victim's race, ethnicity, religion, or other identity.

Some WSE groups seek out confrontation at rallies and demonstrations, with the intention of engaging in street brawls. Violence at such events can originate not only with WSE groups, but also their opponents, whether anti-fascist protesters or other opposition groups. It can frequently (though not always) be difficult to discern who showed up looking for a fight and who engaged in legitimate self-defense; the true responsible party may not be identifiable. However, some WSE groups that eschew terrorism, mass violence, targeted murders, and assaults do prepare for and intentionally encourage or incite street brawls. Street violence of this nature may be spontaneous, expected, and welcomed, but not intentionally plotted beyond establishing conditions likely for it to occur. Multiple WSE groups notably arrived at the 2017 Unite the Right Rally anticipating violence and prepared for it, armed with makeshift weapons and shields. These groups include the League of the South, one of whose leaders aggressively charged into a group of counter-protesters, and RAM, several of whose members were later convicted of conspiracy to riot for assaulting opposing protesters in Charlottesville and also during protests in Huntington Beach, California, on March 25, 2017, and

⁶² See, for example, Sentencing Memorandum, *United States v. Daley*, 18-CR-00025 (W.D. Va., July 15, 2019).

⁶³ "Backgrounder: Rise Above Movement (R.A.M.)," Anti-Defamation League, accessed November 3, 2020. (<https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/rise-above-movement-ram>)

⁶⁴ Affidavit in Support of Complaint, *United States v. Rando*, 18 MJ 02791 (C.D. Cal., October 20, 2018).

⁶⁵ Belew has criticized the tendency to see acts of violence by WSEs as disconnected or random, writing that the movement's "deliberate obfuscation" of its activities "has clouded many journalistic and scholarly accounts. Press coverage too often portrayed organized white power violence as the work of lone gunmen driven by grievance and mental illness." Kathleen Belew, *Bring the War Home* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), page 12. With this criticism in mind, it is worth acknowledging that some of these attacks may have been less random and more strategic than they appear on the surface.

Berkeley, California, on April 15, 2017.⁶⁶ In those cases, RAM members trained for and anticipated violence before the protests, and afterward openly celebrated their assaults on opposition activists.⁶⁷

In addition to physical violence, WSE groups frequently use intimidation tactics, including explicit or implicit threats they deliver through property destruction, vandalism and graffiti, flyering, and physical intimidation. Patriot Front has engaged in such “gray-area” behavior, as have the Loyal White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. Accelerationists, typically associated with more extreme violence, have also been involved in this activity. Richard Tobin, an alleged member of The Base who lived in New Jersey, was charged with coordinating the vandalism of synagogues in Michigan and Wisconsin via online platforms and encrypted communications with two members of The Base in the Great Lakes region.⁶⁸

Preparations for Violence

Members of WSE groups may also participate in paramilitary training camps or other activities that prepare adherents for violence. The level of preparation can vary, including defensive tactics and the construction of shields, as executed by the Shield Wall Network, to shooting drills.⁶⁹ Both AWD and The Base have held training camps for their members—referred to by The Base as “hate camps”—throughout the United States, including in Nevada, Georgia, Illinois, and Washington.⁷⁰



Members of Atomwaffen Division gathered for a three-day hate camp in Nevada in January 2018, dubbed “Death Valley Hate Camp.”

Hate camps represent a critical step for this newer generation of extremist groups, serving as a steppingstone from online activity to real-world action. *ProPublica* reported on an early Atomwaffen hate camp held in the Shawnee National Forest in southern Illinois in 2017:

At least 10 members from different states attended, with some driving in from as far away as Texas, Kansas, Oklahoma and New Jersey. In the Pacific Northwest, cell members had converged on an abandoned cement factory, known as “Devil’s Tower” near the small town of Concrete, Washington, where they had screamed “gas the kikes, race war now!” while firing off round after round from any array of weapons, including an AR-15 assault rifle with a high capacity drum magazine. The training sessions were

⁶⁶ See Sentencing Memorandum, *United States v. Daley*, 18-CR-00025 (W.D. Va., July 15, 2019).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Affidavit in Support of Complaint, *United States v. Tobin*, 19-MJ-05644 (D. N.J., November 12, 2019).

⁶⁹ NBC Left Field, “Path to Radicalization: A Mother Turns to Hate,” *YouTube*, April 17, 2018, (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4hZn_i-2nI).

⁷⁰ See, for example, Floyd County Police Department, affidavit in support of the arrest warrant of Luke Austin Lane, published as part of the press release, “Three Men Charged with Murder Conspiracy, Anti-Government Activity,” January 19, 2020; A.C. Thompson et al., “Inside Atomwaffen As It Celebrates a Member for Allegedly Killing a Gay Jewish College Student,” *ProPublica*, February 23, 2018.

documented in Atomwaffen propaganda videos.⁷¹

These camps serve many functions. They allow groups to engage in tactical training, hold sensitive offline discussion, build group trust, and further indoctrinate members. The camps also provide raw material for future propaganda.

Prison Gangs and Criminal Activity

Some violent WSE activity is tied to criminal activity and prison gangs. Major WSE prison gangs include the Aryan Brotherhood and the Aryan Brotherhood of Texas, an unrelated group based in the Texas prison system. WSE gangs engage in racist violence, often focused on maintaining control over the local criminal or prison power structure, but they are also strongly motivated by illicit economic activities, such as the sale of drugs. The influence of these gangs extends into the streets and is connected to criminal violence in some American communities.⁷²

Transnational Activities and Connections

WSE groups are connected to a global WSE movement through shared ideologies, but many are also connected through joint transnational activities, including participation in protests, historical commemorations, entertainment events, conferences, and—occasionally—combat. Often, the purpose of these activities is to establish cross-border links. Some groups even establish chapters or operate in multiple countries.⁷³ Their transnational activities are sometimes internal to the movement, meant to further connect organizations and adherents. Sometimes they are external, designed to raise public awareness of WSE ideologies and recruit new members. This section introduces some of the activities and events that draw international attendance or support from WSE groups and individuals.

Protests, Demonstrations, and Festivals

Public-facing protests and demonstrations, which connect members and bring attention to the WSE movement, are a significant part of the movement's transnational activities. In addition to raising awareness of WSE ideology, protests and demonstrations serve as internal networking events for the movement. Key dates related to white supremacist extremism—particularly those relevant to Nazism and similar political movements—often serve as the basis for demonstrations, protests, and festivals that draw international attendance. Examples include:

- *Shield and Sword Festival*. Perhaps the most notable historical event celebrated by WSE groups worldwide is April 20, Adolf Hitler's birthday. In 2018, the occasion inspired a large festival called *Schild und Schwert* (Shield and Sword) in Ostritz, Germany. This event was held again in June 2019. The festivities drew attendees from across Germany as well as the Czech Republic and Poland.⁷⁴
- *Lukov March*. The ultranationalist political party Bulgarian National Union hosts a march each February in Sofia, Bulgaria, to commemorate the assassination of Hristo Lukov, a Bulgarian

⁷¹ A.C. Thompson et al., "Inside Atomwaffen As It Celebrates a Member for Allegedly Killing a Gay Jewish College Student," *ProPublica*, February 23, 2018.

⁷² For example, see U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District of Texas, press release, "All 36 Charged Aryan Brotherhood of Texas Members and Associates Have Pleaded Guilty to Federal Racketeering Charges in Southern District of Texas," August 13, 2014.

⁷³ Examples of groups with operations or chapters in other countries include the Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM), which has "nests" in Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Iceland (after being banned in Finland), and Atomwaffen Division, which has affiliated groups such as Sonnenkrieg Division in the United Kingdom and Feuerkrieg Division in the Baltics.

⁷⁴ "German town braces for neo-Nazi concert on Hitler's birthday," Associated Press, April 20, 2018.

nationalist who worked alongside the Nazi regime during World War II.⁷⁵ The 2018 Lukov March attracted over a thousand participants, including several members of the NRM. The 2019 Lukov March attracted an estimated 2,000 people, including members of NRM and other foreign WSE organizations.⁷⁶ The leader of NRM's Swedish branch, Per Sjogren, said of the 2019 march: "We want to get in contact with other nationalists in Europe, as we strongly believe that free, independent countries are very important. We want to regain the power from the globalists—the people who are running the EU, the people who are devastating Europe."⁷⁷ The 2020 Lukov March was cancelled after Bulgaria's Supreme Administrative Court upheld a ban issued by the mayor of Sofia, who cited concerns about anti-Semitism and hate speech.⁷⁸

- *Festung Budapest/Day of Honor*. Various foreign WSE groups attend Festung Budapest, also known as the Day of Honor, an annual commemoration of the 1945 Siege of Budapest fought between Axis and Soviet troops in World War II.⁷⁹ In 2019, event organizers—the Hungary-based WSE group Légio Hungária—claimed that roughly 600 people attended, many of whom were members of WSE organizations from abroad. Photos posted of the event show the flags and symbols of other transnational and foreign WSE organizations, including the Hungarian Hammerskins chapter and the Hungarian Blood & Honour/C18 chapter.

Entertainment Events

International entertainment events unite WSE groups across borders and offer networking, fundraising, and recruiting opportunities. Entertainment events with an international draw are some of the largest events in the WSE sphere, particularly in Europe. Currently, these events are organized around two major themes: music and mixed martial arts (MMA).

Neo-Nazi and National Socialist black metal (NSBM) concerts provide a platform for songs and lyrics that promote violence towards minorities, romanticize Nazi Germany, and champion WSE beliefs.⁸⁰ Many of these concerts occur in Central and Eastern Europe, particularly in Germany and Ukraine.

In Ukraine, tickets for WSE concerts are available for purchase by the public, vetting of attendees is often not required, and the venues are large, with some hosting up to 1,500 people.⁸¹ One of the most notable NSBM concerts, the Asgardsrei festival, occurs every December in Kyiv. The 2019 Asgardsrei festival hosted NSBM bands from across Europe and beyond, including Goatmoon from Finland, M8L8TH from Russia, and Evil from Brazil. A total of 15 bands from eight different countries performed. Asgardsrei was originally founded in Russia by Russian WSE Alexey Levkin, who moved

⁷⁵ Mariya Petkova, "Lukov March: Far-right supporters rally in Bulgaria," *Al Jazeera* (Qatar), February 17, 2018. (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/2/17/lukov-march-far-right-supporters-rally-in-bulgaria>)

⁷⁶ "2,000 torch-wielding nationalists march through Sofia to honor pro-Nazi general," *The Times of Israel* (Israel), February 17, 2019. (<https://www.timesofisrael.com/nationalists-with-torches-march-through-sofia-to-honor-pro-nazi-general/>)

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ "Cancellation of 2020 Lukov March welcomed," *The Sofia Globe* (Bulgaria), February 23, 2020. (<https://sofiaglobe.com/2020/02/23/cancellation-of-2020-lukov-march-welcomed/>)

⁷⁹ See "Russian Far-Right Group Advertises Hungarian Neo-Nazi March," SITE Intelligence Group, January 29, 2020.

⁸⁰ See, for example, the discussion in, for example, Bernhard Forchtner, "Fancy a show? Neo-Nazi concerts in Germany," Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right, September 24, 2018. (<https://www.radicalrightanalysis.com/2018/09/24/fancy-a-show-neo-nazi-concerts-in-germany/>)

⁸¹ We discerned this, for example, from experimenting with the (now defunct) websites of Asgardsrei (<https://asgardsrei.zone/checkout/>) and Bingo Entertainment (<http://bingo.ua/>).



The AWD flag, bottom right, seen at the Asgardrei concert in Ukraine as Russian NSBM band M8L8TH plays.

to Ukraine to fight with the Azov Battalion and brought the festival with him.⁸² Asgardrei now plays a large role in the broader Azov movement's publicity efforts. In addition to Asgardrei, Kyiv also hosts Fortress Europe, which was scheduled to be held on May 22 and 23, 2020, at the same venue as Asgardrei: the Bingo club, with a maximum capacity of 1,500. Like Asgardrei, tickets to Fortress Europe were available for public purchase, with no vetting required. The international NSBM lineup that

had been scheduled for 2020 included M8L8TH, the Russian NSBM band that played at Asgardrei.⁸³

In Germany, WSE concerts and other music events have been steadily increasing in frequency and attendance over the past four years. The German government reported 199 neo-Nazi and WSE related music events in 2015, 223 events in 2016, and 259 events in 2017.⁸⁴ Some of Germany's largest WSE concerts take place in the southeast state of Thuringia. Unlike the WSE concerts in Ukraine, WSE concerts in Germany face government scrutiny.

Mixed martial-arts (MMA) events play a smaller, but increasingly prominent, role in forming transnational connections for the movement. An MMA "fight night" was held prior to the Asgardrei concert in Kyiv, and the 2018 Shield and Sword festival featured fights held by German MMA group Kampf der Nibelungen. The festival organizer said that its goal was to provide an event that "united everything: politics, art, music, and sports."⁸⁵

Conferences

WSE groups and individuals often participate in international conferences organized by and intended for the broader white identity politics movement, including non-violent groups. These conferences serve as networking events, help disseminate relevant ideologies, and foster the transmission of political tactics. Notable international fora that have attracted transnational WSEs include the London Forum and the annual Scandza Forum. Though these conferences attract a broad cross-section of participants interested in white identity issues, specific speakers and participants have been linked to violent groups or themselves have advocated for violence.

⁸² Michael Colborne, "Most Neo-Nazi Music Festivals Are Closely Guarded Secrets—Not This One in Ukraine," *Haaretz* (Israel), December 12, 2019. (<https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/europe/premium-most-neo-nazi-music-festivals-are-closely-guarded-secrets-not-this-one-1.8260218>)

⁸³ "Ticket Fortress Europe 22-23.05.2020," *Svastone.com*, archived April 22, 2020. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20200422191240/https://svastone.com/fortresseurope-2020/>); "Contact," *InterNational Festival Fortress Europe*, accessed April 22, 2020. (<https://fortresseurope.in.ua/en/contacts>)

⁸⁴ Germany Bundesministerium des Innern, "Verfassungsschutzbericht 2016," July 2017, page 66; Germany Bundesministerium des Innern, "Verfassungsschutzbericht 2017," July 2018, page 64. (<https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/embed/vsbericht-2017.pdf>)

⁸⁵ Tim Hume, "German neo-Nazis are trying to go mainstream with MMA and music festivals," *Vice*, April 24, 2018.

Foreign Fighters and the Ukrainian and Russian Nexus

Ukraine and Russia are a major center of transnational WSE activity. The ongoing civil war in Ukraine's Donbas region has attracted fighters from Europe and North America, who travel to join the ranks of Ukrainian military and paramilitary groups. Excluding Russians, more than 2,200 foreign fighters are estimated to have participated in the Ukrainian conflict between 2014 and 2019, including 35 from the United States.⁸⁶

The Azov Battalion is a Ukrainian nationalist organization formed in 2014 to combat the Russian-backed separatist movement in eastern Ukraine. As a military unit, the Azov Battalion has been incorporated into the Ukrainian National Guard as the Azov Regiment. The Azov Regiment is linked—through both origin and leadership—with the National Corps political party and the paramilitary group National Militia, which remain independent of the Ukrainian state and have been the subject of controversy. The three groups are considered by many experts to be elements of a single movement, though the precise links between the organizations are disputed and indeed may be deliberately opaque.⁸⁷

National Corps and the Azov Battalion have sought to establish ties with ultranationalist groups in the United States and Europe, and they have connected with members of multiple extremist groups in the United States, including RAM.⁸⁸ Statements by the leadership of National Corps have suggested that the group seeks to export its ideology and movement, espousing a vision of a modern “Reconquista” that begins with Ukraine and Eastern Europe. As the director of international outreach for Azov Civil Corps described it, the project of Reconquista is intended to “defend not only the Ukrainian nation, national identity, but also the Slavic element, the European element, and in the end—the white race.”⁸⁹ The Azov Battalion and National Corps have sought to recruit foreign fighters from Europe and the United States.

Right Sector forms another element of the Ukrainian nexus. The organization's leadership seems to share the vision of a European Reconquista espoused by National Corps leaders.⁹⁰ Unlike the Azov Regiment, Right Sector's military arm has not been fully absorbed into the Ukrainian military. The group's factions maintain a somewhat combative stance toward the central government and have been targeted in government crackdowns.⁹¹ Right Sector has continued to attract foreign fighters from

⁸⁶ *White Supremacy Extremism: The Transnational Rise of the Violent White Supremacist Movement* (New York: The Soufan Center, September 2019).

⁸⁷ For a discussion of differing viewpoints on the links between the current Azov Regiment and the National Corps, see Oleksiy Kuzmenko, “The Azov Regiment Has Not Depoliticized,” Atlantic Council, March 19, 2020, and Anton Shekhovtsov, “Why Azov Should Not be Designated a Foreign Terrorist Organization,” Atlantic Council, February 24, 2020.

⁸⁸ See Christopher Miller, “Azov, Ukraine's Most Prominent Ultranationalist Group, Sets Its Sights on U.S., Europe,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, November 14, 2018; Affidavit in Support of Complaint, *United States v. Rundo*, 18 MJ 02791 (C.D. Cal., October 20, 2018).

⁸⁹ Quote translated from the original Russian by Bellingcat. Oleksiy Kuzmenko, “‘Defend the White Race’: American Extremists Being Co-Opted by Ukraine's Far-Right,” *Bellingcat*, February 15, 2019; Olena Semenyaka, “Azov W Family - Olena Semenyaka about Azov.Reconquista,” *Azov FM*, accessed November 3, 2020; Olena Semenyaka, “Reconquista Live - Олена Семеняка, керівник проекту Azov.Reconquista,” *Azov FM*, accessed November 3, 2020. (https://www.mixcloud.com/a_radio/azov-fm-reconquista-live-олена-семеняка-руководитель-проекта-azovreconquista/)

⁹⁰ Jordan Green, “The lost boys of Ukraine: How the war abroad beckoned American white supremacists,” *Triad City Beat*, January 19, 2020. (<https://triad-city-beat.com/the-lost-boys-of-ukraine/>)

⁹¹ Alexander Clapp, “Why American Right-Wingers Are Going to War in Ukraine,” *Vice*, June 19, 2016.

western Europe and the United States, some of whom have espoused WSE ideologies or have connections to the movement.⁹²

Despite the stalemate and reduced number of military engagements following the Minsk II Accords in 2015, Ukraine remains an attractive destination for WSE fighters seeking combat experience, including Americans. In fall 2019, the leader of The Base described the conflict as an opportunity to train group members and transfer combat skills from the front lines to his organization.⁹³ Two members of Atomwaffen were deported from Ukraine in October 2020 after having traveled there with the intention of joining the Azov Regiment.⁹⁴

Russian extremist groups, most notably the Russian Imperial Movement (RIM), are also connected with the global WSE movement. RIM is an ultranationalist Russian political movement that embraces monarchism. It maintains a paramilitary arm, the Imperial Legion, that has fought alongside separatists in Ukraine.⁹⁵ Despite its monarchist stance, RIM is tolerated by the Russian government, likely because the group's recruitment of Russians to fight in Ukraine serves the government's foreign policy interests. The group maintains connections with other European WSE groups, including NRM. Two members of NRM who attempted to bomb a home for asylum seekers trained at RIM's "Partisan" paramilitary training course before their attack.⁹⁶ The leader of RIM has also spoken at one of NRM's summits, and donated money to the party.⁹⁷ RIM has cultivated connections with U.S.-based WSE groups, co-organizing a 2015 conference in the Russian city of St. Petersburg that invited attendees from the U.S. white power movement. RIM also met with Matthew Heimbach, leader of a now-disbanded U.S.-based WSE group called the Traditionalist Workers Party.⁹⁸ In April 2020, the U.S. State Department listed RIM as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT), the first WSE group to be designated as such in U.S. history.⁹⁹ State's designation noted that RIM has trained European WSEs who later went on to commit acts of terrorism in their own countries.¹⁰⁰

The next portion of my testimony turns to the other side of the political spectrum, specifically militant anarchism and anti-fascism. Adherents to these ideologies are part of the move toward armed politics domestically. As I noted earlier, the threat of lethal violence from adherents to WSE ideologies greatly eclipses that posed by adherents to militant anarchism and anti-fascism.

Militant Anarchism and Anti-Fascism

⁹² Ibid.; see also Green, "The Lost Boys of Ukraine."

⁹³ Ben Makuch and Mack Lamoureux, "Neo-Nazi Terror Group the Base Discussed Training Pipeline to Ukraine War," *Vice*, October 15, 2020.

⁹⁴ Christopher Miller, "Ukraine Deported Two American Members of a Neo-Nazi Group Who Tried to Join a Far-Right Military Unit For 'Combat Experience,'" *BuzzFeed*, October 8, 2020.

⁹⁵ Andrew Roth, "A right-wing militia trains Russians to fight the next war — with or without Putin," *The Washington Post*, January 2, 2017.

⁹⁶ Josephine Huetlin, "Russian Extremists Are Training Right-Wing Terrorists from Western Europe," *The Daily Beast*, August 2, 2017. (<https://www.thedailybeast.com/russian-extremists-are-training-right-wing-terrorists-from-western-europe>)

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Caitlin Dickson, "The Neo-Nazi Has No Clothes: In Search of Matt Heimbach's Bogus 'White Ethnostate,'" *The Huffington Post*, February 2, 2018; Anton Shekhovtsov, "Russian Politicians Building an International Extreme Right Alliance," *The Interpreter*, September 15, 2015.

⁹⁹ U.S. Department of State, press release, "United States Designates Russian Imperial Movement and Leaders as Global Terrorists," April 7, 2020.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

Historical Background: The Origins of Contemporary Anarchism and Anti-Fascism

Different historical conditions in the United States, Europe, and Latin America in the twentieth century produced largely distinct anarchist and anti-fascist movements across these three regions, despite a common ideological origin. Anarchism emerged as a political ideology in Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Rooted in socialist ideals of class liberation, European anarchism offered an alternative to other constructs of the state: an association of autonomous communities, cooperating together in areas of mutual interest.¹⁰¹ The anarchist movement spread to Latin America and the United States, fueled by immigration and native anti-capitalist and anti-statist sentiments. In the United States and Europe, anarchists sought influence via the labor movement (anarcho-syndicalism) and helped organize militant labor actions.

Central to the anarchist movement's adoption of violence was the emergence of the concept of *propaganda by deed*, which holds that violent action is the best way to draw attention to a political cause and generate momentum.¹⁰² Toward the final decades of the nineteenth century, immigrants from Europe to the United States fostered a new militant anarchist spirit and a historical peak for anarchist violence in the form of assassinations and terrorism. High-profile attacks included the 1886 bombing in Chicago's Haymarket Square and the assassination of President William McKinley in 1902. The federal government subsequently took strong actions to deport foreign anarchists and prevent immigrants with anarchist beliefs from entering the United States. European governments simultaneously cracked down on the anarchist movement, causing the ideology to fade.

Modern anti-fascism is inspired by opposition to fascism in Europe in the inter-war period. The movement of that era included anarchists, communists, socialists, and adherents of other left-wing ideologies. Many, though not all, anti-fascists of the period were explicitly violent, engaging in street fights with similarly violent fascist opponents. As fascist parties took power in Spain, Italy, and Germany, anti-fascism embraced forms of guerilla warfare that persisted through World War II. Among the most notable groups was the German organization Antifaschistische Aktion, the namesake for contemporary "Antifa" groups. Antifaschistische Aktion's fight against Adolf Hitler's genocidal Nazi party in the 1930s contributed to the enduring prominence of the group's name and symbology. German communists and socialists who survived Nazi rule formed Antifa groups immediately after the war's end, but these were – like the modern movement – inspired by the pre-war group rather than direct successors to it. Even so, militant forms of anti-fascism largely disappeared as a result of the Allied victory and subsequent occupation of Germany, as well as the dominance of Soviet communism in Eastern Europe. However, the emergence of neo-Nazi skinheads in Britain and the United States in the 1970s and 1980s led to the return of street-level anti-fascist organizing that persists today.

Anarchist militancy re-emerged gradually, gaining its greatest traction in Southern and Eastern Europe in an insurrectionary form. In Greece, for example, anarchism influenced resistance to the military junta that ruled from 1967 to 1975. In the United States, militant anarchism lay largely dormant until the 1990s. Militant groups regained national prominence thanks to the presence of a violent anarchist formation at the "Battle for Seattle" protests at the 1999 World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference in Seattle. The previous year's WTO Ministerial in Geneva had been marked by riotous

¹⁰¹ George Woodcock, "Anarchism," in *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, n.d., accessed December 9, 2020. (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/anarchism>)

¹⁰² Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* 3d ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), page 5.

violence, but law enforcement saw the problem as “unique to Europe and highly unlikely to migrate to the U.S.”¹⁰³ This proved to be a significant misreading. The raucous anti-WTO protests that gripped Seattle included a contingent of protesters bent on violent disruption. Donning black clothing to obscure their identity (a tactic known as *black bloc*), the protesters seized intersections, started fires, and assaulted officers with chemical irritants.¹⁰⁴ While no deaths or serious injuries occurred during the unrest, the Seattle Police Department acknowledged in an after-action review that “tactically, it was taught a hard lesson by a well-trained and equipped adversary.”¹⁰⁵

Following the WTO conference, anarchist militancy in the United States spent the next 15 years largely unnoticed, save for its involvement in the Occupy Wall Street movement. Organized domestic anti-fascist movements likewise had a quiet start to the millennium. However, both movements became more active and gained national prominence during the candidacy, and then presidency, of Donald Trump. Key events during this period, including the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville and racial justice protests (e.g., following the death of George Floyd), served to galvanize both anarchists and anti-fascists across the United States.

Anarchist and Anti-Fascist Ideology: Key Tenets and Global Trends

Anarchism and anti-fascism, while often conflated with one another, are distinct ideologies and movements. Anarchism is defined by opposition to the modern state, generally seeking to replace it with systems of mutual cooperation and horizontal organization, while anti-fascism is shaped primarily by opposition to perceived fascism and racism. Neither anarchism nor anti-fascism possess universally accepted doctrines, and the movements in some ways lend themselves to variegated definitions. Thus, the definitions that follow should not be construed as *the* anti-fascist or anarchist position. Rather, this testimony describes a collection of beliefs among militant factions of highly diverse and largely decentralized movements. Accordingly, this testimony uses the term *antifa* only in the context of groups that explicitly adopt that label. *Anti-fascism* better encapsulates both the core element of the ideology (that is, opposition to perceived fascism) as well as the range of groups that organize around this principle. This distinction avoids the erroneous implication that there is a single unified Antifa organization within the United States or abroad that shares a coherent structure and defined ideology.

Anarchism

Anarchists, both militant and non-militant, believe that individual freedom is paramount, and that hierarchies of authority and power are generally infringements upon that freedom. They oppose traditional forms of government, instead advocating for decision-making by consensus, direct democracy, and the organization of society by mutual association. Anarchists typically oppose private property rights, which they view as an element of centralized authority.¹⁰⁶

In order to achieve these goals, some anarchists, referred to here as militant anarchists, employ violence. However, **anarchism is not an inherently violent ideology**. Anarchists embrace a wide range of tactics to achieve their goals, the majority of which are nonviolent. Some anarchists eschew

¹⁰³ Seattle Police Department, “The Seattle Police Department After Action Report, World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference, Seattle, Washington, November 29 – December 3, 1999,” April 4, 2000, pages 10, 17-18. (<http://media.cleveland.com/pdextra/other/Seattle%20PD%20after%20action%20report.pdf>)

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pages 38-39.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., page 3.

¹⁰⁶ See, for example, “To Change Everything: An Anarchist Appeal,” *Crimethink*, 2018. (<https://crimethink.com/tce>); David Graeber, “Are You an Anarchist?: The Answer May Surprise You!,” n.d., The Anarchist Library, accessed December 9, 2020. (<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/david-graeber-are-you-an-anarchist-the-answer-may-surprise-you>)

violence in any form. Many anarchists only condone violence as a means of self-defense, believing they can dismantle the state through non-violent means. Other anarchists may accept violence as necessary to achieve their political goals, but do not themselves engage in violence or directly support it. Peaceful activities by anarchist groups include civil disobedience, protest, and community organizing.

A key element of many anarchist movements is *direct action*. While the term has multiple overlapping meanings and connotations, direct action can best be understood as an attempt to achieve concrete aims through individual and group efforts rather than by relying on appeals to the state or another external authority or source of power.¹⁰⁷ The term typically indicates a degree of militancy in the actions taken, which stop short of insurrection. As David Graeber writes in a book published by an anarchist press, “if one is doing more than marching around with signs, but not yet ready to take to the hills with AK-47s, then one is a direct actionist.”¹⁰⁸ While direct action can be violent, the term refers to a wide range of political activity, including community organizing and the establishment and operation of mutual aid societies.¹⁰⁹ For militant anarchists, violence against state institutions, private businesses, and other perceived elements of the hierarchy of power can be an element of direct action.

Anti-Fascism

The term *anti-fascism* has diverse meanings. It can describe a coherent movement, an ideology, an identity, an activity, or a political orientation.¹¹⁰ Simply defined, anti-fascism is opposition to fascism and its proponents. However, anti-fascists often target a wider array of political opponents than a literal definition of fascism would imply, either because they adopt an overly broad definition of fascism or because they seek to combat a broader array of ideologies that they identify as “far-right.”¹¹¹ The single-issue nature of the anti-fascist movement brings together participants who embrace a wide set of political ideologies, typically those considered to be on the left of the political spectrum, including socialism, communism, and anarchism.¹¹² Organizers often intentionally keep the movement broad, focusing on combating a limited set of beliefs rather than establishing a particular political program. Because the movement’s interpretation of fascism tends to be broad, it may define numerous objectives as effectively anti-fascist. For example, one organizer and kickboxer with the Anti-Authoritarian Movement in Greece – where the status and treatment of migrants is a



The logo of Anti-Fascist Action, used by many anti-fascist groups. The black flag represents anarchism.

¹⁰⁷ Direct action is distinct from *civil disobedience*, which is intended to pressure the state or another entity to take action. Rob Sparrow, “Anarchist Politics and Direct Action,” *The Anarchist Library*, 1997. (<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/rob-sparrow-anarchist-politics-direct-action>)

¹⁰⁸ David Graeber, *Direct Action: An Ethnography* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2009), page 204.

¹⁰⁹ Rob Sparrow, “Anarchist Politics and Direct Action,” *The Anarchist Library*, 1997. (<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/rob-sparrow-anarchist-politics-direct-action>)

¹¹⁰ Mark Bray, *The Antifascist Handbook* (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2017), page xv.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Colin Clarke and Michael Kenney, “What Antifa Is, What It Isn’t, and Why It Matters,” *War on the Rocks*, June 23, 2020. (<https://warontherocks.com/2020/06/what-antifa-is-what-it-isnt-and-why-it-matters>)

major issue for the anti-fascist movement – claimed that “if you show solidarity with the refugees, you are an anti-fascist.”¹¹³

Within the broader, and mostly peaceful, anti-fascist movement, militants occupy a small niche. Anti-fascism is not an inherently violent ideology, and not all direct action undertaken even by militant anti-fascists is violent. However, when militant anti-fascists resort to violence, they possess three main rationales for doing so. First, anti-fascists believe that rational debate and government action have historically failed to halt fascism, and therefore violent direct action – sometimes reactive, sometimes preemptive – is justified and necessary.¹¹⁴ Second, anti-fascists argue that militant organizing has historically succeeded in reducing fascists’ activity and disrupting their organizing power.¹¹⁵ Finally, they hold that violent self-defense is appropriate in the face of fascist violence. Militants sometimes justify violence as speaking to fascists “in their own language.”¹¹⁶ The definition of self-defense adopted by militant anti-fascists can be expansive, and they often consider preemptive violence to be self-defense.¹¹⁷

The growing number of domestic anti-fascist and anti-racist groups dedicated to armed self-defense is noteworthy. Numerous anti-fascist “gun clubs” embrace the Second Amendment and carry firearms. The majority of these groups and their members are not violent extremists and are not directly connected to violence. They see guns as an important element in defending themselves and marginalized communities from fascists, racists, and other hostile groups.

Willem van Spronsen, a member of a John Brown Gun Club chapter – one of the more prominent anti-fascist gun clubs – attacked a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention center in Washington State, armed with a gun and Molotov cocktails.¹¹⁸ He died in the attack. While the Gun Club chapter with which he was affiliated did not explicitly endorse his methods, the group posted a commemoration of van Spronsen on their website on the anniversary of his death:

He was a hero in many ways. There has not been a single event that we’ve attended where at least one person doesn’t come up to us to tell us how Will has changed their life. Even those who didn’t know him personally but who have read his words say his ideology has become a driving force in their lives. “you don’t have to burn the motherfucker down, but are you going to just stand by?” ... He lives on in those that loved him and those who continue his work. Rest in power, Will.¹¹⁹

Related Movements

The militant anarchist and anti-fascist movements intersect with other forms of political militancy, most notably ecological and animal-rights movements, as well as separatist and indigenous resistance movements. Anarchist movements may embrace ecological militancy as part of a broad program of anti-state and anti-capitalist resistance.

¹¹³ Bray, *The Antifascist Handbook*, page 103.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, page 169.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, page 65.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, page 169.

¹¹⁸ Hannah Allam, “‘I am Antifa’: One Activist’s Violent Death Became a Symbol for the Right and Left,” *NPR*, July 23, 2020.

¹¹⁹ “Rest in Power, Will, One Year Later,” Puget Sound John Brown Gun Club, July 13, 2020. (<https://psjbgc.org/blog/rest-in-power-will-one-year-later/>)

Militant environmentalist and animal rights groups use violence to disrupt business practices and industries they view as damaging the environment. The violence they employ can include direct attacks on infrastructure and facilities, such as laboratories conducting animal research, as well as attacks on government facilities, banks, and other elements viewed as symbolic of the capitalist system.¹²⁰ Some ecological and animal rights militants explicitly embrace anarchist political programs. Moreover, ecological and animal rights militant groups such as the Earth Liberation Front and Animal Liberation Front circulate announcements of their claimed attacks on anarchist media outlets, and anarchist groups express solidarity with imprisoned ecological and animal rights militants.

Anarchists and anti-fascists also support numerous separatist and indigenous movements. For example, they may act in support of American Indian and First Peoples movements in the United States and Canada. Oil pipelines and other elements of the energy industry – which are frequent targets of both environmental and indigenous activism – are sometimes a focus. American anarchists report that they were involved in protests opposing the Dakota Access Pipeline in North Dakota, at which participants clashed with police and burned construction vehicles.¹²¹ Anarchists in Canada have sabotaged rail infrastructure in solidarity with First Peoples activists opposing the oil industry.¹²² Recently, two women were arrested in Washington state on terrorism charges for placing a series of shunts on railroads, devices which would have interrupted an electrical current that enables the tracks' safety features. The attacks were claimed on an anarchist website in solidarity with the indigenous peoples of Canada.

Overview of Domestic and Foreign Militant Groups

Militant anarchist and anti-fascist networks have historically emphasized local, community level-organizing. *Affinity groups* – small, local groups of individuals that organize actions – typically represent the basic unit of organization for both sets of actors. Within anarchist networks, cells may form only to carry out a limited number of actions, often only one, before disbanding. Thus, attributing violence to a single persistent organization can be difficult. When national or international groups are formed, they are usually (but not always) informal, demonstrating limited coordination over time.

For anti-fascist groups, the level of groups' organization varies within and between countries.¹²³ Prior to 2020, membership numbers that could be attributed to U.S.-based affinity groups have typically been no greater than 15 per group.¹²⁴ However, the recent emergence of militant anti-fascist groups with large online followings that may be able to coordinate larger and longer-lasting militant actions

¹²⁰ For additional information on environmental and animal rights militancy in the United States, see Jerome P. Bjelopera, *Domestic Terrorism: An Overview* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2017).

¹²¹ "Report Back from the Battle for Sacred Ground," *Crimethink*, November 1, 2016. (<https://crimethink.com/2016/11/01/feature-report-back-from-the-battle-for-sacred-ground>)

¹²² See, for example, "Toronto: Explorations in Rail Disruption in Solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en (Canada)," 325, January 16, 2020. (<https://325.nostate.net/2020/01/16/toronto-explorations-in-rail-disruption-in-solidarity-with-the-wetsuweten-kanada>)

¹²³ See "Forming an Antifa Group," *It's Going Down*, July 2012. (<https://itsgoingdown.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/howtoantifa-revised.pdf>); "How to Set Up an Anti-Fascist Group," Anti-Fascist Network, accessed December 9, 2020. (<https://antifascistnetwork.org/how-to-set-up-an-anti-fascist-group>)

¹²⁴ Matt Zapotosky, Robert Klemko and Jacqueline Alemany, "In Trump's Campaign Against Antifa, Observers See an Attempt to Distract from Protesters' Genuine Outrage," *The Washington Post*, May 31, 2020.

suggests that this model has the potential to change and, in fact, could already be changing.¹²⁵

Militant anarchists, like anti-fascists, organize into small affinity groups.¹²⁶ These groups are sometimes connected to larger, possibly transnational, networks. While some cells may coordinate, others are linked only by violent acts committed under a common name. The broader networks do not appear to exercise centralized control. It is also unclear from open sources to what extent cells communicate with one another beyond public communiqués.

Through early 2020, violence perpetrated by militant anarchists in the United States has primarily been attributable to individuals or small groups engaged in direct action at protests. Militant anarchists seem to coordinate most heavily when conducting direct action at protests, while isolated cells or individuals are more commonly the perpetrators of arson attacks and bombings. Outside the United States, numerous militant anarchist networks are engaged in overtly violent activities. While some of these networks are strictly national in scope, several have affiliated cells in multiple countries, sometimes on multiple continents. However, it is possible that many cells claiming affiliation with the same network – particularly those operating in different regions and on different continents – do not have direct links and are instead connected largely or entirely by shared ideologies.

Because of the disparity in the domestic threat posed by WSE groups as opposed to militant anti-fascist or anarchist groups, this testimony does not profile individual militant anti-fascist or anarchist organizations. Instead, it explores various kinds of violence employed by this movement, both domestically and internationally.

Violent Activities

Militant anarchists and anti-fascists engage in a range of violent activity. The kinds of violence and the targets against which violence is employed vary by group, location, and ideology. While militant anarchists and anti-fascists in the United States, Europe, and Latin America engage in militant street actions and arson attacks targeting property, U.S.-based anarchists and anti-fascists largely eschew assassinations, murder, bombings, and targeted violence outside of protests. From 1994 to early 2020, American anti-fascists were not linked to any victim deaths in politically motivated attacks.¹²⁷ However, in August 2020 an anti-fascist killed a participant during a rally in support of President Trump in Portland, Oregon.

That killing aside, the use of violence by militant anarchists and anti-fascists may be constrained by their ideological commitments. Militant anarchists and anti-fascists are more likely to engage in what they dub “defensive” violence, or violence intended to protect protesters from interference or harm by political opponents or law enforcement. Militant anarchists target property more often than they target people, viewing such attacks as less violent means of combating capitalism and the state. When using potentially dangerous tactics intended to cause property damage or draw public attention, such as bombings or arson, many anarchist groups do so late at night at locations likely to be devoid of people, thus mitigating the risk of injury or death. These groups sometimes attempt to evacuate

¹²⁵ Joel Finkelstein et al., *Network-Enabled Anarchy: How Militant Anarcho-Socialist Networks Use Social Media to Instigate Widespread Violence Against Political Opponents and Law Enforcement* (Network Contagion Research Institute, 2020). (<https://ncr.io/wp-content/uploads/NCRI-White-Paper-Network-Enabled-Anarchy-25-Sept-259pm.pdf>)

¹²⁶ Jerome P. Bjelopera, *Domestic Terrorism: An Overview* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2017), page 14. (<https://fas.org/spp/crs/terror/R44921.pdf>)

¹²⁷ Lois Beckett, “Anti-Fascists Linked to Zero Murders in the U.S. in 25 Years,” *The Guardian* (UK), July 27, 2020. (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/27/us-rightwing-extremists-attacks-deaths-database-leftwing-antifa>)

potential casualties prior to carrying out bombings. Groups that have employed lethal violence, particularly nihilistic groups such as Individualidades Tendiendo a lo Salvaje (ITS), are generally rejected by the broader anarchist community, including by other militant anarchists.¹²⁸

Street Violence and Riots

The most common anti-fascist and anarchist violence in the United States and Europe is street fighting that takes place at marches and protests. Such activity can be an attempt to advance a cause (e.g., anti-capitalism or environmentalism), to counter political opponents, or to prevent or retaliate against law enforcement interference in anarchist or anti-fascist projects and spaces (e.g., squats).

Street violence is of growing concern in the United States and intersects heavily with the trend toward armed domestic politics. Street violence as a tactic does not necessarily command the fear or destructive power of assassinations or bombings, but its capacity to inflict harm remains potent. In 2016 and 2017, a number of major protests and rallies were disrupted by militant anarchists and anti-fascists assaulting demonstrators and law enforcement. Three people were stabbed in clashes between anti-fascists and Ku Klux Klan members at a rally in February 2016.¹²⁹ Anarchists and anti-fascists participated in violence at protests against the inauguration of President Trump in Washington, D.C., on January 20, 2017. At the protests, anarchists and anti-fascists damaged property, committed arson, and attacked police officers.¹³⁰ During these protests, an anonymous anarchist or anti-fascist demonstrator famously punched white nationalist Richard Spencer in the face as he was being interviewed on television.

The following month, a violent march that prominently included militant anarchists and anti-fascists in Berkeley, California, prevented the controversial right-wing speaker Milo Yiannopoulos from appearing at the University of California at Berkeley. The group destroyed equipment, broke windows, and attacked police officers with fireworks, ultimately leading to the event's cancellation. Five people were injured.¹³¹ The violence in Berkeley was a textbook example of violent deplatforming. Militant protesters physically denied Yiannopoulos a platform from which to speak, viewing him as a fascist spreading dangerous ideas.

Berkeley saw further violence in August 2017, when militant anti-fascists fought Trump supporters at a protest.¹³² That month, the ongoing battle between anti-fascists and their political opponents raged in Charlottesville, Virginia. A coterie of individuals, a number of whom were prominently identified with far-right or white nationalist movements, had gathered in Charlottesville for the "Unite the Right" rally, which was dedicated in part to protesting the removal of a local statue of Confederate General

¹²⁸ See, for example, "'ITS, or the Rhetoric of Decay' (Joint Statement of Insurreccional Groups in Mexican Territory)," 325, July 12, 2017. (<https://325.nostate.net/2017/08/03/its-or-the-rhetoric-of-decay-joint-statement-of-insurreccional-groups-in-mexican-territory/>) In this statement, militant anarchist groups state that "ITS undertook a totally opposite route to the fundamental principles of Anarchy, moving away from the ethics of freedom and the radical critique of power, Renouncing not only the 'air of family' but everything that exalts us as anarchists." They claim that ITS is in fact characterized not by a commitment to anarchist principles, but rather by "proto-fascist decadence."

¹²⁹ Farah Stockman, "Anarchists Respond to Trump's Inauguration, by Any Means Necessary," *The New York Times*, February 2, 2017.

¹³⁰ Ibid.; Keith L. Alexander and Paul Duggan, "Inauguration Protesters Were 'Playing a Role in the Violence and Destruction,' Prosecutor Says," *The Washington Post*, November 20, 2017.

¹³¹ Veronica Rocha and Peter H. King, "UC Berkeley Blames Violent 'Black Bloc' Protesters for 'Unprecedented Invasion,'" *The Los Angeles Times*, February 3, 2017.

¹³² James Queally et al., "Violence by Far-Left Protesters in Berkeley Sparks Alarm," *The Los Angeles Times*, August 27, 2017. (<https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-berkeley-protests-20170827-story.html>)

Robert E. Lee. The rally quickly became a national show of force for the far-right and white nationalists. The many counter-protesters, the vast majority of whom were non-violent, included some militant anti-fascists, who used homemade weapons and chemical irritants to fight rallygoers.¹³³

The threat of violence by militant anarchists and anti-fascists at protests has persisted into 2020, most prominently during the civil unrest following George Floyd's death. Portland, Oregon, in particular, was gripped by ongoing violence involving anarchists, as rioters vandalized the city, assaulted police officers, and set fire to buildings. The *Los Angeles Times* has noted that the violence produced tension with black community leaders, who "denounced an arson attack by protesters on a building that houses a police station and Black-owned businesses on Northeast Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard."¹³⁴ Throughout 2020, it is clear that some perpetrators of violence during the civil unrest were militant anarchists or anti-fascists,¹³⁵ but the amount of violence attributable to anarchists or anti-fascists or to specific networks is unclear.¹³⁶

Militant anti-fascists and anarchists have used a number of low-grade, commercially available weapons or self-modified tools for offensive and defensive purposes. Clubs, poles, and bats of various kinds can serve multiple purposes. Offensively, they can be used to beat opponents. Defensively, they can be used to counter advancing law enforcement or to deflect and counter police batons or similarly styled weapons in the hands of opponents. Bricks, bottles, cans, and other makeshift projectiles are common. Pepper spray or other chemical irritants are sometimes used, both for personal protection and for assault.¹³⁷ Militant anarchists and anti-fascists also frequently make use of shields. Some groups use shields in formation to form a wall.

In addition to these relatively simple weapons, some anarchists and anti-fascists make use of more novel tools, including low-grade explosives or incendiary devices such as Molotov cocktails and fireworks, along with lasers. Fireworks are often used at protests to disorient law enforcement, and can cause bodily harm. Protesters frequently engage in simple arson, burning trash cans, debris, or other objects, often in an attempt to attract attention.¹³⁸ Lasers may be directed at the eyes of opponents, especially law enforcement. This tactic can cause physical harm and is illegal in many places. Lasers are also used against electronic systems. In Chile, for example, lasers have reportedly been used in a coordinated manner to bring down police drones.¹³⁹

¹³³ Near the conclusion of the rally, a white supremacist extremist drove his vehicle into a crowd of counter-protesters, killing one and injuring several more. For an overview of violent activities surrounding the rally, see Joe Heim, "Recounting a Day of Rage, Hate, Violence and Death," *The Washington Post*, August 14, 2017.

¹³⁴ Richard Read, "Portland's Anarchists Say They Support Racial Justice. Black Activists Want Nothing to Do with Them," *Los Angeles Times*, November 16, 2020.

¹³⁵ See, for example, U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Massachusetts, Press Release, "Worcester Man Charged with Civil Disorder and Possession of a Destructive Device," June 3, 2020. (<https://www.justice.gov/usao-ma/pr/worcester-man-charged-civil-disorder-and-possession-destructive-device>)

¹³⁶ Alanna Durkin Richer, Colleen Long, & Michael Balsamo, "AP Finds Most Arrested in Protests Aren't Leftist Radicals," *Associated Press*, October 20, 2020.

¹³⁷ "Black-Clad Anarchists Storm Berkeley Rally, Assaulting 5," *CNBC*, August 28, 2017. (<https://www.cnn.com/2017/08/28/berkeley-protest-rally-stormed-by-anarchists.html>)

¹³⁸ William Gagan, "Black Bloc Protesters Hurl Pepsi Cans at Police, Set Newspaper Boxes on Fire in the Portland Street," *Willamette Week*, May 1, 2017. (<https://www.wweek.com/news/2017/05/01/black-bloc-protesters-hurl-pepsi-cans-at-police-set-newspaper-boxes-on-fire-in-the-portland-street>)

¹³⁹ Gustavo Rodríguez, "Desde Algún Lugar: Carta a Un(a) Chileno(a) Sobre la Situación Actual (II) (From somewhere: Letter to a Chilean about the current situation (II))." *contra info*, December 2, 2019. (<https://es.contrainfo.espi.net/2019/12/02/desde-algun-lugar-carta-a-un-a-chileno-a-sobre-la-situacion-actual-ii/>)

Militant anti-fascists and anarchists committing violent acts at protests often do so as part of *black blocs*. Black bloc refers to an organizational tactic often employed by anarchists and anti-fascists when engaging in protests or direct action.¹⁴⁰ When in black bloc, individuals wear masks, bandanas, and head-to-toe black clothing to project strength and group uniformity while maintaining anonymity.¹⁴¹ The primary rationale for black bloc is to prevent identification of individual actors by the state or other opponents.¹⁴² Black blocs tend to both form and disassemble within the marches and protests in which they appear; they are often formed



Black Bloc formation at a 2019 rally in Portland, Oregon (Stephanie Keith, Getty Images)

by a coalition of militant groups, rather than emerging from a single, persistent organization.¹⁴³ Black bloc does not belong to one particular group or ideology. The tactic originated with Germany's "autonomous movement" (Autonomen) during the late 1970s and 1980s, and received widespread attention in the United States following its use at the 1999 Battle for Seattle.

Black bloc has multiple uses for militant actors. Defensively, it protects both nonviolent activists and extremists from surveillance and possible law enforcement action. It allows disparate groups to organize into larger, more powerful units and affords them mobility. Offensively, militant anarchists and anti-fascists can use the anonymity that black bloc affords to carry out various forms of direct action, ranging from vandalism to assaults on law enforcement and political opposition.

Black blocs also facilitate de-arresting tactics. Anarchists, anti-fascists, and other protesters claim to have used de-arresting tactics in the Battle for Seattle in 1999, in protests linked to the Occupy movement in 2012, and in protests in the wake of George Floyd's death in 2020.¹⁴⁴ According to one anarchist, de-arresting, as facilitated by black bloc, "includes the very basic principle of no comrade left behind, that we do not leave people in the police lines and decide to flee, and for that the black bloc is deeply courageous."¹⁴⁵ De-arresting is usually carried out as follows: If law enforcement officers are trying to detain or arrest a member of the black bloc, other members will intervene by engaging the officers, often violently, to make the act of arresting more difficult. This intervention theoretically allows individuals being detained to escape back to the anonymous mass of the black bloc, where they are protected and cannot be identified again.

¹⁴⁰ Mark Bray, *The Antifascist Handbook* (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2017), page 194.

¹⁴¹ Francis Dupuis-Deri, *Who's Afraid of the Black Blocs?* (Montreal: Lux Editeur, 2007), page 2.

¹⁴² Mark Bray, *The Antifascist Handbook* (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2017), page 194.

¹⁴³ Francis Dupuis-Deri, *Who's Afraid of the Black Blocs?* (Montreal: Lux Editeur, 2007), page 2.

¹⁴⁴ "A Communiqué from One Section of the Black Bloc of N30 in Seattle," ACME Collective, December 4, 1999. (https://depts.washington.edu/wtohist/documents/black_bloc_communique.htm); "Battle for the Soul of Occupy: Round 7 – The Black Bloc Anarchist Turn," *Adbusters*, May 7, 2012; Blazedroots, "Occupy Congress Protesters De-Arrest Fellow Protester," *YouTube*, January 18, 2012. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eEjG7wD8DXQ>); Teetron 9000 News, "BLM Protesters 'De-Arrest' One of Their Own in Portland, OR, on Aug 24 2020," *YouTube*, August 25, 2020. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFajc7fwOfI>)

¹⁴⁵ Harsha Walia, "10 Points on the Black Bloc," *Rise Like Lions*, n.d., accessed December 9, 2020. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20120202041954/http://riselikelions.net/pamphlets/14/10-points-on-the-black-bloc>)



A sign marking the boundary of Seattle's Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone (David Ryder, Getty Images)

In rare instances, street violence, or the threat of it, may be employed by militant anarchists and anti-fascists to establish and maintain control of small autonomous spaces. These spaces may then be used by activists for protest activities, community organizing, or as a refuge for populations they believe to be victimized (for example, undocumented migrants). Autonomous spaces have been formed in both the United States and Europe. The most prominent in Europe – and the one most closely associated with anarchists and anti-fascists – is the Exarcheia

neighborhood in Athens, an area of the city from which law enforcement is largely excluded, and which has become home to numerous undocumented migrants.¹⁴⁶ On June 8, 2020, ongoing street violence and political pressure led the Seattle Police Department to withdraw from its East Precinct, allowing protesters to occupy the building and establish the Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone (CHAZ).¹⁴⁷ The zone was defended by members of the Puget Sound John Brown Gun Club.¹⁴⁸ CHAZ was marred by violence in the absence of law enforcement. While its most visible areas were home to murals and community gardens, teenagers were murdered just blocks away. A 19-year-old and 16-year-old were both shot and killed days apart from one another. In total, four people were shot with firearms in CHAZ during its short existence.¹⁴⁹ In addition to these incidents, a rape, arson, and burglary ultimately drew Seattle police back to the zone on July 1, spelling a quick end to CHAZ.¹⁵⁰

Arson

Beyond using incendiary devices during protests, anarchists in the United States, Europe, and Latin America have employed arson, usually to target property rather than individuals. Some past targets in the United States have included:

- *Vehicles.* In 2012, an anarchist in Portland threw a Molotov cocktail at an empty police cruiser in a precinct parking lot.¹⁵¹ In honor of May Day in 2020, militant anarchists claimed credit for firebombing an Amazon delivery vehicle in Los Angeles County, in retaliation for Amazon's provision of cloud servers to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.¹⁵²
- *Political Offices, Government Officials, and Law Enforcement.* On September 11, 2014, an anarchist attempted to firebomb the local office of a member of Congress in Kansas City using Molotov cocktails that failed to ignite. The attack took place early in the morning, and the office was

¹⁴⁶ Molly Crabapple, "The Attack on Exarchia, an Anarchist Refuge in Athens," *The New Yorker*, January 20, 2020.

¹⁴⁷ Ashitha Nagesh, "This Police-Free Protest Zone Was Dismantled – But Was It the End?," BBC, July 11, 2020.

¹⁴⁸ Kim Kelly, "Meet the Gun Club Patrolling Seattle's Leftist Utopia," *The Daily Beast*, June 14, 2020.

¹⁴⁹ Ezra Marcus, "In the Autonomous Zones," *The New York Times*, July 1, 2020.

¹⁵⁰ Deborah Home, "'This is About Life or Death': City Says SPD Will Return to East Precinct," *KIRO*, June 22, 2020.

¹⁵¹ "Man Who Threw Molotov Cocktail at Portland Police Car Gets 30 Months," *KOMO News*, April 1, 2014.

¹⁵² "Incendiary Attack Against Amazon in Los Angeles County (USA)," 325, May 4, 2020. (<https://325.nostate.net/2020/05/04/incendiary-attack-against-amazon-in-los-angeles-county-ua>)

unoccupied at the time.¹⁵³ Three anarchists were accused by Illinois state prosecutors of plotting to use Molotov cocktails and other incendiary devices to attack law enforcement, President Barack Obama's campaign office, and Mayor Rahm Emanuel's home during the 2012 NATO summit in Chicago.¹⁵⁴ The men were ultimately acquitted of the most serious charges they faced – providing material support for terrorism and conspiracy to commit terrorism – but were convicted of mob action and possession of an incendiary device.

- *Infrastructure.* An anarchist group calling itself the Bristling Badgers Brigade set fire to a cell tower at Philadelphia's Navy Yard.¹⁵⁵
- *Construction Sites.* Housing developments have been targeted in areas where gentrification is a concern. A group referring to itself simply as Some Anarchists claimed responsibility for the February 2014 burning of a housing development under construction in Seattle.¹⁵⁶ In Philadelphia, a housing development fire in May 2017 may have similarly been the work of anti-gentrification anarchists. While no one directly claimed the attack, it was noted in a Philadelphia anarchist periodical in a section entitled "What Went Down." The attack also occurred around the same time as other anti-gentrification criminal activity likely committed by Philadelphia anarchists.¹⁵⁷

In European countries with significant militant anarchist or anti-fascist activity, arson is more common and is aimed against a more diverse array of targets.

Bombings

Militant anarchists and anti-fascists in the United States rarely use explosive devices beyond the incendiaries described previously in this report (e.g., low-grade explosives or incendiary devices such as Molotov cocktails and fireworks). The most notable plot in the past decade was an attempt by five anarchists to detonate homemade bombs made with C-4 on a bridge near Cleveland, Ohio, in 2012. The plotters had considered numerous other targets, including financial institution signs on rooftops throughout the Cleveland metropolitan area, before settling on their final plan.¹⁵⁸ The plot was foiled by federal investigators.

In contrast, explosives are a frequent – and often preferred – tool of foreign militant anarchists. They are used in attacks targeting both people and property. Most of the explosives are crude improvised explosive devices used to destroy property. Designs vary, but some have been as simple as gunpowder

¹⁵³ Tony Rizzo, "Man Who Threw Molotov Cocktails at Rep. Emanuel Cleaver's KC Office Gets 10-Year Sentence," *The Kansas City Star*, June 28, 2016. (<https://www.kansascity.com/news/local/crime/article86417757.html>)

¹⁵⁴ Steve Schmadeke, "NATO 3 Found Guilty of Mob Action and Arson, but Not Terror Charges," *The Chicago Tribune*, February 6, 2014; "Who Are the 'NATO 3,'" *The Chicago Tribune*, February 18, 2014.

¹⁵⁵ Bristling Badger Brigade, "Philadelphia (USA) – Anarchist Group 'Bristling Badger Brigade' Burns Cell Tower," *The Plague and the Fire*, n.d., accessed December 9, 2020. (<https://plagueandfire.noblogs.org/philadelphia-usa-anarchist-group-bristling-badger-brigade-burns-cell-tower/>)

¹⁵⁶ Puget Sound Anarchists, "Attack on Seattle 'Green' Development," March 3, 2013. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20130607204925/http://pugetsoundanarchists.org/content/attack-seattle-green-development/>); "Anarchists Claim Responsibility for Judkins Park Arson," *KIRO 7*, March 5, 2013.

¹⁵⁷ "What Went Down," *Anathema* (Philadelphia anarchist publication), May/June 2017, page 2. (<https://anathema.noblogs.org/files/2017/05/Issue-IV-Print-final.pdf>); Jillian Kay Melchior, "Anarchy in the Streets of Philadelphia," *Wall Street Journal*, June 15, 2020. (<https://www.wsj.com/articles/anarchy-in-the-streets-of-philadelphia-11592264144>); Sam Newhouse, "So-Called Summer of Rage Anarchists Arrested for Allegedly Trashing Developing Block," *Metro Philly*, May 2, 2017.

¹⁵⁸ U.S. Attorney's Office, Northern District of Ohio, Press Release, "Cleveland Man Guilty of Trying to Destroy a Bridge with Explosives," June 13, 2013.

placed inside a fire extinguisher.¹⁵⁹ Some attacks in Latin America and Europe have employed conventional explosives like dynamite. European anarchists have on rare occasion used military hardware, including grenades and rocket-propelled grenades. Anarchists in Europe and Latin America also make use of parcel bombs to target political officials, executives in private financial and energy firms, foreign embassies, politicians, and military bases.

Assassination, Murder, and Targeted Assault

Some militant anarchists and anti-fascists target specific individuals or groups beyond the context of street violence, with varying degrees of harm intended and inflicted. Some groups employ targeted assaults. Other groups, particularly abroad, have targeted their enemies for assassination. In the United States, such incidents are rare. Most assaults and physical violence take place as part of larger protests or other mass actions. When preplanned attacks against specific individuals do occur, they have typically involved militant anti-fascists targeting political opponents (usually perceived fascists) with less-than-lethal violence. The most notable incident was a 2012 assault by members of the Hoosier Anti-Racist Movement against members of a white power political organization meeting in a restaurant in Chicago.¹⁶⁰

Assassinations and targeted assaults are more frequently carried out by insurrectionary anarchists in Southern Europe and Latin America. Common targets for these groups include business executives and employees, political opponents, and politicians and government officials. For example, in Greece two militant anti-fascists who were members of the group People's Struggling Revolutionary Powers murdered two members of the Greece's Golden Dawn party in a drive-by shooting in retaliation for the murder of a popular anti-fascist rapper.¹⁶¹ In Chile, anarchists have broken into the homes of police officers with the intention of attacking them. In one instance, an anarchist stabbed an officer.¹⁶² ITS has attempted to murder numerous individuals in Latin America, including the president of Metro de Santiago in Chile and a priest in Mexico.¹⁶³

Intimidation and Doxxing

Doxxing is a tactic that involves publishing private or personally identifiable information about an individual or organization (such as home addresses, names of the target's children, and the schools they attend). It is commonly used by both violent and non-violent anti-fascists and anarchists in the United States in attempts to neutralize their opponents. There are a wide range of contexts in which doxxing may be employed, not all of them malign. Doxxing can be used to "out" dangerous individuals

¹⁵⁹ Gideon Long, "Chileans Baffled by Persistent Bomb Attacks," *BBC* (UK), August 20, 2014; "Anarchists Claim Explosive Devices Targeting Buses & Gas Station in Chile," SITE Intelligence Group, June 26, 2020.

¹⁶⁰ Mark Bray, *The Antifascist Handbook* (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2017), page 113.

¹⁶¹ "Greek Leftist Group Claims Golden Dawn Assassinations," *Deutsche Welle* (Germany), November 17, 2013; Colin Clarke and Michael Kenney, "What Antifa Is, What It Isn't, and Why It Matters," *War on the Rocks*, June 23, 2020. (<https://warontherocks.com/2020/06/what-antifa-is-what-it-isnt-and-why-it-matters>) In October 2020, a Golden Dawn supporter was found guilty of fatally stabbing the rapper, Pavlos Fyssas.

¹⁶² Gustavo Rodríguez, "Desde Algún Lugar: Carta a un(a) Chileno(a) Sobre la Situación Actual (II), (From Somewhere: Letter to a Chilean About the Current Situation (II))" *contra info*, December 2, 2019. (<https://es.contrainfo.espi.net/2019/12/02/desde-algun-lugar-carta-a-un-a-chileno-a-sobre-la-situacion-actual-ii>)

¹⁶³ "Eco-Nihilist Group Claims Responsibility for Attempted Murder of Chilean Mass Transit Official," SITE Intelligence Group, May 10, 2019. (<https://ent.siteintelgroup.com/Far-Right-/Far-Left-Threat/eco-nihilist-group-claims-responsibility-for-attempted-murder-of-chilean-mass-transit-official.html>); "(Mexico) Black April for the Catholic Church," *Maldición Eco-Extremista*, May 16, 2018. (http://maldicionecoextremista.altervista.org/en-mexico-black-april-for-the-catholic-church/?doing_wp_cron=1528461790.6676220893859863281250)

to their employer, community, and law enforcement, but it can also be used to incite or invite violence against people solely due to their imputed beliefs.

Doxxing has been utilized across the extremist spectrum. It was used recently in advance of January's Capitol Hill insurrection. A now-banned Facebook page called "Red-State Secession," which helped organize the January 6 protests, featured calls for violence. Page members also sought out the addresses of "enemies," including federal judges, members of Congress, and progressive politicians.¹⁶⁴

While doxxing carries implied threats, militant anarchists and anti-fascists often accompany doxxing with direct threats against individuals and organizations. For example, members of Smash Racism DC, an anti-racism group in Washington, D.C., showed up to Fox News host Tucker Carlson's house, and shouted threats, including: "We know where you sleep at night."¹⁶⁵ The group had previously publicly shared Carlson's home address.

Transnational Connections

The transnational connections among militant anarchists and anti-fascists reflect the role of affinity groups and horizontal organizing in crafting these movements' networks. Bound together by shared ideals, these groups place great emphasis on indirect communication via public statements and the exchange of information at a distance.

Militant anarchists and anti-fascists use violent actions to express solidarity with their comrades. Particular actions and accompanying statements demonstrate commitment to a common cause. The U.S.-based group Bristling Badger Brigade committed arson in solidarity with fugitive British anarchist Huw Norfolk, known as Badger.¹⁶⁶ The group set fire to a Philadelphia cell tower; cell towers and other telecommunications infrastructure were frequent targets of Badger's. The frequency of violent actions on May Day broadcasts a message of support for the labor movement.¹⁶⁷

As is the case with the WSE movement, anti-fascists and anarchists, including some Americans, have traveled abroad to participate in armed conflicts, which attract militants from multiple foreign countries. Connections formed between militant anarchists and anti-fascists fighting in these conflicts may form the basis for future transnational coordination.

Rojava, a geographic space in northeastern Syria with a large Kurdish population, has emerged as the most important foreign nexus for these movements. Anarchists and anti-fascists from the United States and Europe have traveled to Syria to fight with the Kurdish People's Protection Units (*Yekîneyên Parastina Gel*, or YPG) against the Islamic State (ISIS) and participate in what they call the "Rojava Revolution." Since Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad withdrew his troops from Kurdish areas of Syria in 2012, members of the YPG have been working to establish their own structures of governance. The

¹⁶⁴ Sheera Frenkel, "Facebook Bans a Page Used to Coordinate Pro-Trump Protests After Calls for Violence," *The New York Times*, January 6, 2021.

¹⁶⁵ Brian Stelter, "Police Launch Investigation After Antifa Activists Descend on Fox Host Tucker Carlson's Home," CNN, November 8, 2018; Allyson Chiu, "'They Were Threatening Me and My Family': Tucker Carlson's Home Targeted by Protesters," *The Washington Post*, November 8, 2018.

¹⁶⁶ Bristling Badger Brigade, "Philadelphia (USA) – Anarchist Group 'Bristling Badger Brigade' Burns Cell Tower," *The Plague and the Fire*, n.d., accessed December 9, 2020. (<https://plagueandfire.noblogs.org/philadelphia-usa-anarchist-group-bristling-badger-brigade-burns-cell-tower>)

¹⁶⁷ Avi Selk, "Anarchists Crash May Day Rally in Paris, Burning Cars and Smashing Shop Windows," *The Washington Post*, May 1, 2018; Sandhya Somashekhar, "Marches, Sit-Ins and Arrests at May Day Protests," *The Washington Post*, May 1, 2017.

purported organizing principles are direct democracy, feminism, and egalitarianism, drawn from the ideals of the imprisoned Kurdish nationalist ideologue Abdullah Öcalan.¹⁶⁸

Not all foreign fighters who joined the YPG have been anarchists, anti-fascists, or even left of center politically. However, a contingent of left-wing American and European foreign fighters organized into an English-speaking platoon called “Antifa International Tabur.” The Antifa platoon managed to make a name for itself in the fight against ISIS. The platoon’s leader, Karim Franceschi, was allowed to sit in on the YPG’s council of generals, and the platoon played a role in cutting off ISIS from the Euphrates.¹⁶⁹ Even if members of the platoon provided hyperbolized accounts of its importance to ISIS’s geographic defeat in their discussions with media outlets (a common habit for foreign fighters involved in wars far from home), these fighters saw legitimate action in the anti-ISIS push.

A smaller number of anti-fascists and anarchists have traveled to Ukraine and Russian-occupied Crimea to take part in the ongoing fighting, with militant anti-fascist and anarchist fighters joining both sides of the conflict. Some of these fighters who joined the pro-Moscow side have told media outlets that they were motivated by opposition to ultranationalist and fascist ideologies held by some leaders and members of certain pro-Kyiv factions.¹⁷⁰ A few volunteers from the Antifa International Tabur who had fought in Syria have made their way to Ukraine.¹⁷¹

Blurred Lines: Reciprocal Radicalization and Fringe Fluidity

One set of challenges related to the current rise in domestic extremism relates to the way in which extremists interact with each other. In the current polarized climate, the presence of opposite extremes tends to strengthen both sides and provides average people a reason to drift toward extremes. Theories of reciprocal radicalization and fringe fluidity reveal how this dynamic impacts the ecosystem of extremism.

The concept of **reciprocal radicalization** describes how the increased power and success of groups aligned with one extremist ideology will fuel recruitment and encourage activity by groups aligned with ostensibly opposing ideologies, in what becomes a mutually reinforcing cycle. Interactions between groups locked into reciprocal radicalization often result in “a bizarre mixture of cooperation, competition, and overt fighting between different groups.”¹⁷² This phenomenon exists between many forms of political militancy. Reciprocal radicalization can be spurred by opposing groups’ rhetoric.

Anti-fascist groups in particular tend to be reactive. They most often emerge and mobilize when a core mass of individuals perceives a fascist or racist threat. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, for example, the United States saw a significant increase in anti-fascist groups that arose to combat racist skinheads and the Ku Klux Klan.¹⁷³ In 2016 and 2017, anti-fascists mobilized in a similar fashion, in response to a host of perceived “fascist” threats. The emergence of the alt-right, the election of President Trump, and the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville all served as catalysts for anti-fascist activity.

¹⁶⁸ Seth Harp, “The Untold Story of Syria’s Antifa Platoon,” *Rolling Stone*, July 10, 2018.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ See, for example, Sara Merger, “War Junkies: Why Foreign Fighters Are Flocking to Ukraine,” *ABC* (Australia), May 3, 2019. (<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-05-04/ukraine-foreign-fighters-merger/11054728>)

¹⁷¹ Seth Harp, “The Untold Story of Syria’s Antifa Platoon,” *Rolling Stone*, July 10, 2018.

¹⁷² Julia Ebner, *The Rage: The Vicious Circle of Islamist and Far-Right Extremism* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2017), page 215.

¹⁷³ Mark Bray, *The Antifascist Handbook* (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2017), pp. 66-71

Conversely, right-of-center extremist groups use public awareness of anti-fascism, heightened by the participation of militant anti-fascists at protests that have become violent, to recruit and mobilize their own followers. The Proud Boys, a controversial group that has a history of street violence and describes its orientation as “Western chauvinism,” has been particularly effective, organizing marches and rallies directly themed around countering anti-fascists. White supremacist extremists and militia groups have similarly leveraged anti-fascist activity to hold and advertise public events.¹⁷⁴

Opposing extremists may develop a symbiotic relationship in which they reinforce each other’s worst fears, drive each other’s recruitment, and provoke one another into “tit-for-tat” retaliation.¹⁷⁵ They can confirm one another’s narratives by telling the same stories with the role of *victim* and *demon* reversed. For example, in Europe militant Islamists and far-right extremists have opposing perspectives (i.e., *The West is at war with Islam* or *Islam is at war with the West*), but the story they tell is the same. They depend on each other and provide one another with a *raison d’être*. For this reason, some experts call them opposite “sides of the same coin.”¹⁷⁶

When extremes answer extremes in this manner, society writ large suffers. Neutral parties can be drawn toward embracing or joining militant groups. The media may amplify material that reinforces and provokes the extremes, thus normalizing their narratives. Part of the threat thus lies in extremists’ ability to *dictate the conversation* and push neutral parties into the same dichotomous camps that the extremists inhabit.

Another dynamic at play in the extremist ecosystem is **fringe fluidity**, a radicalization pathway in which individuals who come to accept and act on an extremist ideology transition from the embrace of one form of violent extremism to another. In cases of fringe fluidity, the pathway to the new form of violent extremism can be understood in the context of the individual’s prior ideology. Often, a shared out-group forms an important commonality between the two ideologies.¹⁷⁷

Militant anarchism advocates the violent rejection of the state, capitalism, and most other ordering principles of contemporary Western society. Some forms of militant anarchism intersect with other ideologies that reject similar principles to form hybrid ideologies and provide opportunities for tactical learning. One such hybrid ideology is *national anarchism*, which lays claim to the anarchist label but advocates opposition to the state in order to advance racist ideals—a combination that is antithetical to most other anarchists’ outlook. National anarchists view anarchy as an opportunity to advance an ideology of white separatism and create new white ethno-states from the chaos. They desire racially divided “national autonomous zones.” National anarchists also emphasize elements of environmentalism. The most prominent group in the United States is the Bay Area National Anarchists, which claims to have members from both far-right and far-left political persuasions. National anarchist groups have also previously formed in Europe and Australia.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴ See, for example, “Far-Right Advertises Upcoming Protest in Seattle Against Autonomous Zone,” SITE Intelligence Group, June 15, 2020; “Promoting Police Disbandment, Far-Right Community Calls on Whites to take ‘Defensive Action,’” SITE Intelligence Group, June 15, 2020.

¹⁷⁵ Julia Ebner, *The Rage: The Vicious Circle of Islamism and Far-Right Extremism* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2017), p. 33.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

¹⁷⁷ Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Madeleine Blackman, “Fluidity of the Fringes: Prior Extremist Involvement as a Radicalization Pathway,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (January 2019). (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1057610X.2018.1531545>)

¹⁷⁸ “California Racists Claim They’re Anarchists,” *SPLC Intelligence Report* (May 2009).

ITS, which defines itself as an anarchist and ecological extremist group, has in its official communiqués repeatedly expressed admiration for terrorist groups and individuals subscribing to very different ideologies. ITS, as previously discussed, is distinct from most anarchist groups in its attitude toward indiscriminate violence. Fueled by nihilism, the group applauds mass violence of all kinds. Thus, ITS has praised members of ISIS and issued calls for jihadist attacks, writing that they “call on the mujahadin to attack indiscriminately. If you lone wolves have the ability, do it, against Christian targets or any other objective of Western civilization.”¹⁷⁹ At the same time, ITS has also celebrated anti-Muslim terrorist attacks, including the March 2019 mosque shootings in Christchurch, New Zealand.¹⁸⁰

Fringe fluidity demonstrates the extent to which extremists may be able to prioritize common grievances and goals even when their overarching ideologies conflict. Individuals may shift between extremist streams before ultimately carrying out violent acts in the name of one. For example, Brenton Tarrant, the perpetrator of the aforementioned March 2019 Christchurch mosque attack, shifted between several extremist ideologies, ultimately declaring himself an ecofascist at the time of the attack.¹⁸¹ In an era of heightened political polarization and violence, extremists may seize the opportunity to draw recruits and mobilize from a growing menu of overlapping and sometimes conflicting militant ideologies.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

To conclude, I offer several potential policies that subcommittee members may consider. The first three potential policies are aimed specifically at countering the financing of violent extremist groups, while the remaining policies contend with the domestic violent extremist threat more broadly. I would like to stress at the outset that *any* policies introduced to combat domestic violent extremism must be narrowly targeted and rights-protective. Policies that unfairly target one subset of domestic violent extremists, or that seek to criminalize constitutionally protected behaviors, may only serve to push the country closer toward deepening conflict.

The U.S. Government Should Consider Designating WSE Groups as Terrorist Organizations.

Designating extremist groups as terrorist organizations is a significant step that the Departments of State and the Treasury do not take lightly. The 2020 designation of the Russian Imperial Movement as an SDGT was a significant step that advanced U.S. policy toward WSE groups. It is worth considering further designations of violent WSE groups and actors that meet the criteria for being designated as SDGTs or else as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs).¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ “ITS Releases Seventy-First Communique, Promising to ‘Indiscriminately Kill’ Until Stopped by Force,” SITE Intelligence Group, January 7, 2019; “Eco-Extremist Says That Groups Should Learn Strategy from Islamic State,” SITE Intelligence Group, November 23, 2016.

¹⁸⁰ ITS-Mexico, “(Mexico) 77 Comunicado de ITS: Sobre la Macacre Eco-Fascista En Nueva Zelanda,” *Maldición Eco-Extremista*, March 27, 2019. (<http://maldicionecoextremista.altervista.org/mexico-77-comunicado-de-its-sobre-la-macacre-eco-fascista-en-nueva-zelanda>)

¹⁸¹ Tarrant details his various inspirations and beliefs in his manifesto, where he observed that “when I was young I was a communist, then an anarchist, and finally a libertarian before coming to be an eco-fascist.” He describes inspiration from a number of ideologies, figures, and cultures, some of which are apparently in conflict with one another.

¹⁸² The Department of State has highlighted several key differences between the two designations. Both designations will cause a designated group’s assets to be frozen. However, State notes that “the FTO designation imposes immigration restrictions on members of the organization simply by virtue of their membership, whereas E.O. 13224 [the SDGT designation] restricts travel for persons who meet the criteria contained within the order. In addition, the FTO designation triggers a criminal prohibition on knowingly providing material support or resources to the designated organization.

Consider Introducing a Domestic Designation Statute.

Enacting a statute that allows for designation of domestic violent extremist organizations as terrorist organizations is an option to consider. The creation—and even-handed employment—of such a statute would likely be the most direct way to address and interdict sources of funding for domestic violent extremist organizations. Such designation would potentially criminalize the act of financing these organizations and enable authorities to clamp down on the assets that these organizations may already hold. At the same time, this statute would be fraught with fairness and civil liberties concerns.

The first area of concern is ensuring that this statute is ideologically neutral in conception and application. Designations should correspond to the actual threat of violence that individual groups pose, not simply the ideas that they espouse. The use of a domestic designation statute to target groups adhering to only certain ideologies would potentially *heighten* the risk of extremist violence. The perception of unfair singling out for designation may become a rallying cry, drawing more members to violent extremists' ranks.

Second, this statute must be clear about the predicate acts that could result in designation. Vague or imprecise language about predicate acts would render the statute vulnerable to legal challenges and open the door for bias in its application. Not only must the predicate acts be clearly articulated, but the threshold for designation should be relatively high: For a group to be designated, it must pose a legitimate threat to the lives of others.

Finally, the statute must be accompanied by a redress mechanism to challenge designations since the consequences of being designated as a terrorist organization are severe.

Map Groups and Their Finances.

Even if there existed extensive investigatory and prosecutorial tools to leverage against domestic violent extremist organizations, a dearth of knowledge on how these organizations are funded and structured would hamper efforts to interdict or seize assets. Accordingly, it is important to deepen our understanding of the organizational structures and funding mechanisms common to domestic violent extremist organizations.

The current consensus among experts who study domestic violent extremist organizations is that these groups are relatively fluid and devoid of organizational structure. This may be so. However, I have observed a tendency among those who study militant organizations to see groups as disorganized or non-hierarchical when they in fact have a hidden hierarchy or organizational structure. Past inaccuracies suggest that our current understanding of domestic violent extremist organizations' structure may be incomplete. It is also the case that, in the digital age, fluid organizational structures can quickly morph into more concrete ones. The potential for this rapid transformation increases the need to unearth concealed or loose organizational structures. By understanding how organizations may seek to align themselves in times of conflict, authorities can proactively disrupt sources of funding and mitigate the potential for increased harm. Further research in this area is thus justified.

Another difference is that only E.O. 13224 designations provide the Department of the Treasury the derivative authority to designate additional individuals or entities providing support to already designated individuals or entities.²⁹ Additional information can be found at: U.S. Department of State, Media Note, "Terrorism Designation FAQs," February 27, 2018. (<https://2017-2021.state.gov/terrorism-designations-faqs/index.html>)

Conduct Messaging Campaigns Aimed at Discrediting Violent Extremist Groups.

The United States has a history of devoting resources to messaging efforts designed to discredit extremist groups. While Washington's record of discrediting jihadist groups through its messaging can most charitably be described as mixed, it would be foolish to cede this ground to violent extremist groups. Propaganda and messaging constitute an inherent part of any armed conflict and are particularly important to sub-state groups. I have long argued for de-bureaucratized teams—something that can be described as “startups within government”—to be given flexibility in the messaging sphere. In the present case, this could be accomplished with a nimble unit of communications professionals and intelligence officers monitoring WSE propaganda in real time and generating up-to-the-minute counter-messaging content that exposes falsehoods in WSEs' messaging, as well as facts that embarrass the movement. Such a model would inhibit WSEs' ability to enter new communication spaces unchallenged.¹⁸³

The point of a “startups within government” approach is that government messaging efforts tend to be overly risk-averse. Most startups in the commercial sphere fail within their first three years of existence, and that is a good thing: Those that survive the Darwinian process confronting new businesses often go on to become highly profitable and accomplished. A “startups within government” model would accept the near certainty of failed experiments, with the understanding that those de-bureaucratized cells that *do not* fail in a competitive environment are more likely to have an outsize impact on the problem they are addressing. It is worth exploring whether this approach would be an innovative and appropriate response to WSE and other violent extremist groups in the realm of messaging.

Work with International Partners to Explore Instances of Transnational Collaboration.

Since many violent extremists are transnational in nature, particularly the WSE movement, the U.S. government should collaborate with international partners to study instances of transnational activity involving violent extremist groups and individuals. The U.S. government should study and prepare for potential new avenues of internationalization and transnational collaboration among violent extremist groups. Such understanding and awareness would also potentially illuminate new pathways for disrupting these groups financially.

Understand the Dynamics of Reciprocal Radicalization and Fringe Fluidity.

As this testimony details, one set of challenges related to violent extremism stems from the way in which extremists interact with each other. In an era of heightened political polarization and violence, extremists may seize the opportunity to draw recruits and mobilize from a growing menu of overlapping and sometimes conflicting militant ideologies, making fringe fluidity an increasingly powerful force. Likewise, evidence of reciprocal radicalization among extremist groups demands attention, as extremists of one political persuasion have no shortage of opposing actors and events to radicalize them. The U.S. government should devote resources to studying fringe fluidity and reciprocal radicalization—both past occurrences and potential future consequences. Doing so would afford the government an understanding of how extremist organizations and ideologies can overlap and interact with each other in the present milieu and could open new avenues for reducing the size of ecosystems of violent extremism.

¹⁸³ For more discussion on how governments may be able to adopt lessons from start-ups in countering WSEs and other violent non-state actors, see: Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Nathaniel Barr, “The Lean Terrorist Cell: How Startup Companies and Violent Non-State Actors are Changing the Old World Order,” *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, Volume 17, Issue 2, Summer/Fall 2016, pages 36-37. (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/26396169?seq=1>)

Do Not Show Ambiguity with Groups That Employ Sub-State Violence. Resist the Temptation to Pick Sides Between Extremist Groups.

In recent years, politicians have too often spoken on issues of extremist violence with ambiguity and a lack of clarity. In the context of a broader national move toward armed politics, this is highly problematic. Political leaders should recognize the role they may play in furthering extremist narratives. Reacting to violent extremism by choosing a side serves to prioritize goals and enemies *as the extremist would*. It is important to resist the temptation to pick sides between extremist groups. As political factions and movements in the United States resort to violence or the threat of violence to pursue objectives, the government must be unified and precise in its messaging: Political violence is completely intolerable in a democratic society. Such exacting language would deny any semblance of political legitimacy to groups and individuals seeking to use violence to advance political goals.

Create Architecture for the Age of Mass Attacks.

As discussed, WSEs have conducted mass attacks in public spaces, some of which have left significant numbers dead. In too many mass attacks, the built environment, including architecture, infrastructure, and other human-made features, has aided attackers and worked against those trying to escape from harm's way. Victims have been trapped by limited exits or prevented from securing the room they are in by doors that do not lock from the inside. A solution to this challenge is *crisis architecture*, an architectural paradigm I developed that seeks to maximize the likelihood that individuals will survive a mass attack. It offers a set of design principles that incorporate integrated tactical, psychological, and technological security measures, while preserving the function and aesthetics of buildings to which these measures are applied.¹⁸⁴

The United States and other societies have previously relied on architecture to address significant social problems and threats. This includes efforts to reduce crime through Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, which is the most widely adopted modern theory about the intersection of design and security. Another example is the post-9/11 adoption of external area defense, which was designed to defend buildings, landmarks, and public spaces from terrorist attacks. While external area defense is effective at mitigating the damage that might be done by a bomb blast, the paradigm is not designed to defend against an attacker who has entered the target building—which is where crisis architecture enters the picture. An architecture for the age of mass attacks of all forms is sensible and may sadly be necessary.

¹⁸⁴ Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Tadd Lahnert, "Crisis Architecture: Building to Defend Against Active Aggressors," *War on the Rocks*, December 2, 2019. (<https://warontherocks.com/2019/12/crisis-architecture-building-to-defend-against-active-aggressors/>) See also Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, "Addressing mass shootings through the built environment," TEDxTemecula Talk, *YouTUBE*, December 7, 2020. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRkRv314JH8>)

CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY: FOUNDATION FOR DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACIES

House Committee on Financial Services

Subcommittee on National Security, International Development, and Monetary Policy

Dollars against Democracy:

Domestic Terrorist Financing in the Aftermath of Insurrection

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Washington, DC
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Introduction

Chairman Himes, Ranking Member Hill, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to talk about how the U.S. government (USG), and in particular the U.S. Department of the Treasury, can employ similar tools and strategies against white nationalist and other domestic terrorist groups as it has employed against global jihadist groups over the past two decades.

This is a personal issue for me. During my time at the Treasury Department, I fought to cut off funding to terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda, the Islamic State, and Hezbollah. As a deputy assistant secretary in the Bush administration and eventually as the assistant secretary for terrorist financing in the Obama administration, my primary responsibility was to lead the design and implementation of strategies to attack the financial networks of these groups and other threats to our country's national security. And while we should never let down our guard with respect to those still-potent terrorist organizations, it has become tragically clear that there are domestic extremist groups that in some ways present an even greater threat to our ideals and our democracy.

The events of January 6 cast this threat into stark relief, but racially and ethnically motivated violent extremists (REMVEs) have been on the rise for many years. We have the responsibility to target those extremist groups with the same determination, creativity, and sense of purpose that we displayed in the years following 9/11. To be sure, counter-illicit finance strategies are not silver bullets. There are practical and constitutional limitations to domestic action that do not arise in the global context, and it is imperative that we adhere to constitutional requirements in applying these tools domestically.

But if there is one thing that the Treasury Department has demonstrated since the establishment of its Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence in 2004, it is that any comprehensive, all-of-government response to a national security threat must include a strategic financial component. It is my hope and expectation that the new leadership at the Treasury Department will turn its attention to precisely that challenge, and below I offer some thoughts on how Treasury could shape its approach.

Development of a Counter-Illicit Finance Strategy

From the outset, I must be clear that the purpose of a counter-illicit finance strategy is not to replace the traditional law enforcement tools of the Justice Department, FBI, or other federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies. Those law enforcement activities – including investigations, prosecutions, and criminal and civil forfeiture – will remain the foundation of any domestic effort.

Supplementing those efforts, the USG counter-illicit finance strategy should seek to hinder REMVEs' ability to use the financial system to mask their identities and to raise and move funds. An effective strategy should ensure the U.S. financial system is a hostile environment for REMVE financing, making it costlier and riskier for these groups to engage in financial activity and advance their nefarious ends. The first step must be to understand the typologies and

methods by which such groups raise and move funds, and to map out their financial networks. This first step should be followed by two general categories of actions: 1) “Offense” – undermining the financial networks that support these groups; and 2) “Defense” – taking systemic action within the financial system to make it less vulnerable to abuse by these groups.

1. Understanding the Financial Networks and Activities of REMVE Groups

It is sometimes stated that REMVE groups are less vulnerable to financial measures because of their informal and decentralized structure. I believe that this is a hypothesis that has yet to be tested. Any group that engages in organized activity needs to raise and move funds. And when those activities extend nationwide or globally, it only increases such groups’ reliance on the financial system.

The USG should undertake a comprehensive effort to understand how REMVE groups are accessing the financial system, and to the extent possible, to map their financial networks. With respect to groups that operate domestically, the USG will need to rely not just on law enforcement information, but also on financial analysis from the Treasury Department’s Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, and on information and insights gleaned from public-private partnerships with financial institutions and other stakeholders. REMVE groups that operate globally are further subject to collection by intelligence agencies, and U.S. authorities can likewise benefit from information exchange with foreign authorities tracking these groups. Information exchange can occur bilaterally with our allies and partners or through multilateral groups such as the Financial Action Task Force, the Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units, or the G-7.

2. Targeted Financial Measures

Once the financial networks and activities of REMVE groups are better understood, the USG should consider the application of targeted financial measures. The USG currently has the authority needed to apply targeted financial sanctions against foreign REMVE groups, and it began to do so last spring with the designation of the Russian Imperial Movement (RIM) as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist. As a result, U.S. persons are required to freeze the assets of, and are prohibited from engaging in any transactions with, this group. This designation also allows the U.S. government to pursue criminal action against domestic actors who receive or provide material support from or to RIM. Importantly, it also provides the foundation for a Treasury Department financial campaign against RIM composed of follow-on designations targeting RIM’s foreign financiers and facilitators.

Unfortunately, the USG has yet to target additional foreign REMVE groups. In addition, and in contrast to previous campaigns against jihadist groups, Treasury has not followed up the initial RIM designation with a financial pressure campaign involving waves of sanctions seeking to dismantle facilitation networks. I encourage the USG to pursue such a campaign as a priority matter.

The Treasury Department could also deploy Section 311 of the USA PATRIOT Act to target foreign financial institutions or classes of transactions that support the financial networks of

foreign extremist groups. Section 311 empowers the Secretary of the Treasury to identify a foreign financial institution or class of transactions that poses a money laundering or terrorist financing threat to the U.S. financial system, and instruct U.S. financial institutions to take specific actions to protect themselves from the identified threat. Such actions could include a variety of measures up to and including cutting the identified threat off from the U.S. financial system. The menu of regulatory options under Section 311 provides Treasury with a flexible and graduated set of responses to specific threats.

Practical and constitutional constraints give the USG far less ability to apply targeted financial measures against domestic REMVE groups. Congress should consider legislation allowing for the criminal prosecution of actors that provide material support to domestic REMVE groups. Beyond that, it could also consider legislation allowing for sanctions-like or 311-like authorities to protect the U.S. financial system from abuse by domestic groups. Such authorities will need to be tailored to ensure that the government complies with constitutional requirements, including First Amendment restrictions on how groups are targeted and due process restrictions on how such measures are applied. One consideration could be to forego the asset freezes usually associated with sanctions in favor of some of the more limited enhanced reporting or customer due diligence requirements contained in Section 311.

3. Systemic Preventative Financial Measures

There are measures that the USG can take today to make the U.S. financial system less vulnerable to abuse by REMVE groups. The United States has a robust anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) regime, and the enactment of legislation last month imposing new beneficial ownership reporting requirements will make it even more difficult for illicit actors to hide within the financial system and engage in anonymous transactions. The U.S. AML/CFT regime, however, can always be fine-tuned and adjusted to address a variety of vulnerabilities, including those presented by REMVE groups. The potential measures in Treasury's AML/CFT toolbox include:

- The issuance of guidance to financial institutions on REMVE financial typologies, methodologies, and red flags;
- The establishment of public-private partnerships to ensure effective cooperation and communication between government—federal law enforcement and supervisory authorities—and the private sector, including financial institutions, and social media and technology companies that are involved in the movement of money or value;
- The use of the information-sharing authorities created by Section 314 of the USA PATRIOT Act to share with financial institutions the names of individuals or entities suspected of criminal activity associated with REMVE groups;
- The use of Geographic Targeting Orders (GTOs) to collect information on the financial activities of REMVEs engaged in criminal activity; and
- Adjustments to the Suspicious Activity Report form to highlight the importance of identifying suspicious activity relating to REMVE groups.

Daniel L. Glaser

February 25, 2021

Taken together, these measures will strengthen the ability of financial institutions to identify, report, and impede the financial activity of REMVE groups, and will ensure that the U.S. financial system is a hostile environment for these groups.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to answering your questions.

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF DR. DANIEL J. ROGERS
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY, INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT,
AND MONETARY POLICY ON
“DOLLARS AGAINST DEMOCRACY: DOMESTIC TERRORIST FINANCING IN
THE AFTERMATH OF INSURRECTION”
ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2021

Chairman Himes, Ranking Member Hill and members of the committee, good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss the funding mechanisms of domestic violent extremist groups. I am a Co-Founder and the Chief Technology Officer of the Global Disinformation Index, a transparent, independent, neutral nonprofit focused on catalyzing change in the technology industry to disrupt the incentives that exist to create and disseminate disinformation online. We partner with advertising and technology companies, governments, and advocacy groups to provide data to demonetize disinformation and hate. Our primary focus is on disrupting the monetization of disinformation through online advertising, but we also consider other ways in which disinformation is monetized, including payments, merchandising, and infrastructure such as web hosting or domain name registration.

Last Fall, my colleague Ben Decker and our team at the Global Disinformation Index collaborated with the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, a think tank based in the U.K., to conduct a study entitled “Bankrolling Bigotry” that examined the funding mechanisms of American hate groups. You may ask why a disinformation-focused nonprofit examined hate groups in America,

and what is the relevance to the events of January 6, 2021. We view disinformation through the lens of what we call adversarial narrative conflict. Whenever someone peddles an adversarial narrative that intentionally pits people against each other, or against trusted institutions, is intentionally misleading, and carries with it a risk of harm, that is the core of disinformation in our view. And no narrative is more adversarial than hate and bigotry. Furthermore, many of the groups implicated in the events of January 6th are the same groups we examined last year in our study. This is why I sit before you today: to discuss what we learned about how technology and payments companies inadvertently facilitate the fundraising that enables groups like those that participated in the insurrection on January 6th to operate.

Hate is on the rise. In 2018, the FBI announced that hate crimes had reached their highest volume in nearly two decades. In 2019, the Southern Poverty Law Center, representatives from whom sit alongside me today, calculated that the number of avowed white supremacist groups had doubled between 2017 and 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with the death of George Floyd and the most divisive election cycle in recent history, has inspired many of these groups to mobilize both online and offline to threaten safety and security writ large.

It is no longer a surprise that these groups leverage the internet as a primary means of disseminating their toxic ideologies, soliciting funds, and selling merchandise. One only needs to search Amazon or Etsy for the term “Qanon” to uncover shirts, hats, mugs, books, and other paraphernalia that both monetize and further popularize the domestic violent extremist threat. Images from that fateful day last month are rife with sweatshirts that say “Camp Auschwitz” or “6 Million Was Not Enough” that until very recently were for sale on websites like TeeSpring

and CafePress. As we speak, at least 24 individuals indicted by the U.S. Department of Justice for their role in the January 6th insurrection, including eight members of the Proud Boys, have used the crowdfunding site GiveSendGo to raise nearly a quarter million dollars in donations.¹ And it's not just about the money. Yes, the merchandise sold through these platforms supplies funds to those who would peddle or exploit this ideology, but this merchandise also acts like a team jersey for the hate groups, bolstering the narrative itself and helping the groups recruit new members and foment further hatred toward their targets.

We set out to study the online funding mechanisms for these groups in a data-driven, systematic way. For the purposes of our study, we adopted the definition of hate group from the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC). The SPLC-defined hate groups include anti-immigrant, anti-LGBTBQ, anti-Muslim, white nationalist, white supremacist, and militia groups, all of whom had some sort of online presence. All in all, we analyzed the digital footprints of 73 US-based groups across 60 websites and 225 social media assets and their use of 54 different online fundraising mechanisms, including 47 different payment platforms and 5 different cryptocurrencies, ultimately finding 191 instances of hate groups using online fundraising services to support their activities. The funding mechanisms used by these groups included both primary platforms that facilitate financial interactions between organizations and individuals directly on the platforms – Amazon, for example – and intermediary platforms such as Stripe or Shopify that build donation buttons or merchandise stores directly into a group's own website. We also included crowdfunding sites like GoFundMe, payments facilitators like PayPal, monetized content streaming services like YouTube Super Chats, and cryptocurrencies such as

¹ Brittain, Amy and Willman, David. "'A place to fund hope': How Proud Boys and other fringe groups found refuge on a Christian fundraising website," Washington Post. 18 January 2021.

bitcoin in our analysis. All of these payment mechanisms were linked with either websites affiliated with each group or with associated social media accounts on Facebook, Telegram, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Gab, BitChute and Minds. The sheer number of technology providers I just mentioned is the first clue to the scale and scope of the problem – this is not the problem of any one individual company or platform, but rather a systemic problem of hate and bigotry exploiting an entire industry, and even government policy, to raise funds, peddle extremist ideologies, and ultimately, as Jan 6th demonstrated, commit acts of violence, even insurrection.

A number of interesting conclusions stood out to us in performing this work. For starters, over half – 62%, to be exact – of the platforms we identified already have explicit policies against hate and extremism on their platforms. The tools to intervene already exist, and this data point suggests either a lack of resources or a lack of will to adequately enforce existing terms of service against these groups. That is not to say there is zero enforcement. We found that the most extreme groups associated with the highest risk of violence – white nationalist and white supremacist groups – were the most likely to eschew more mainstream platforms in favor of pseudonymous cryptocurrencies, while militia groups tend to prioritize funds through the sale of merchandise rather than via direct donations. This suggests that the platforms have moderated at least the most violent groups toward more cumbersome, less centralized methods of exchanging funds. But given the sheer number of groups still making use of more mainstream monetization platforms, the industry has a long way to go.

But there are other hurdles to platform moderation whose origins are much closer to home in Washington, DC. A large fraction of the groups we studied – 44% to be specific – have been recognized as tax-exempt under sections 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code.. A full 100% of anti-Muslim groups as identified by the SPLC have approved tax exempt status in the US, along with 75% of anti-Immigrant groups and 70% of anti-LGTBQ groups. Over one third of militia groups we identified in this study, including the Oath Keepers, multiple members of which were recently indicted by the Justice Department on conspiracy charges related to the January 6th insurrection,² have charity status. And this status gives these groups automatic access to a whole spectrum of charity fundraising tools, from Facebook Donations to Amazon Smile, to the point where the overall most common fundraising platform we identified across all of the data was actually Charity Navigator’s “Giving Basket” function. These platforms are reticent, to say the least, to make unilateral decisions about which IRS-approved charities to host and which ones to moderate.

This problem is not new. Marcus Owens, who ran the Exempt Organizations Division at IRS from 1990 until 2000, testified to the House Committee on Ways and Means in 2019 about the problem of the tax code subsidizing hate. He pointed to a specific example involving avowed white supremacist Richard Spencer, who founded his National Policy Institute “think tank” using an EIN of a dormant organization, The Institute for Free Enterprise Development, which hadn’t filed a Form 990 with the IRS since 1997. When Spencer resurrected the EIN and subsequently filed a Form 990 in 2005, it was for an organization with a new name and new officers and

² Savage, Charlie, Goldman, Adam, and MacFarquhar, Neil, “‘This Kettle Is Set to Boil’: New Evidence Points to Riot Conspiracy.” The New York Times. 19 January 2021.

directors.³ This sounds like fraud, but in fact it comports with existing law and allows legitimate organizations to adapt to changing circumstances, but also allows groups like Spencer's to evade even the most basic scrutiny of their activities by the IRS. It is a problem that goes back decades and stems from a combination of the lack of resources at the IRS to properly enforce compliance by exempt organizations as well as a long standing effort by some to exploit the charity rules for political, and now extremist, purposes.

The events of January 6th have brought this issue into stark relief. In the days leading up to the insurrection, the Oath Keepers' founder, Stewart Rhodes, appeared on a podcast hosted by notorious anti-vaccine conspiracy theorist Mike Adams and solicited charitable donations to the Oath Keepers Educational Foundation.⁴ One can speculate that funds that listeners contributed, which they were notably able to deduct from their federal taxes, went to transporting and lodging members of the group slated to participate in the ensuing riots.

Fortunately, according to the experts we've consulted, this is one area that Congress and IRS can address unencumbered: In fact, IRS could quickly and unilaterally remove the Oath Keepers section 501(c)(3) status using the jeopardy assessment process to bypass the normal internal IRS administrative appeal process thus preventing further charitable fundraising⁵, given that nine members of their leadership have now been indicted.

³ How the Tax Code Subsidizes Hate: Hearing Before the House Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Oversight. 116th Congress. 8 (2019) (testimony of Marcus S. Owens)

⁴ <https://www.brighteon.com/fa01234a-d2ca-4b22-ab39-10d1d466bcab> at minute 42 of the video.

⁵ Section 6861 of the Internal Revenue Code and Section 4.4.17 of the Internal Revenue Manual

But to date the IRS has not done so, according to our experts, largely because they lack the resources and training to properly enforce the regulations governing exempt organizations. The enforcement gap is the result of larger misaligned priorities within the design of the IRS as a whole. The IRS is, at its core, a revenue collecting agency, yet the Exempt Organizations Division, which is in charge of regulating the very organizations we're discussing today, by design generates no significant revenue. Thus, it is last in line for resources, making it an easy target for exploitation. One fix would be to remove that function from the IRS and create a new, separate, and well-resourced governmental organization outside of the IRS with the mission of regulating tax-exempt organizations, much like the independent Charity Commission does in the United Kingdom.

In the meantime, private industry must step up and do more. They have taken some action, but they can go further. Since the publication of our report in October 2020, we've documented at least seventeen private-sector actions taken by platforms against the groups we enumerated. For example, after our publication, four of the six payment mechanisms routing funds to the Oath Keepers were blocked. Subsequently, Amazon has even removed the Oath Keepers from Amazon Smile. But seventeen actions out of the nearly 200 instances we observed speak to the breadth of the problem and the rampant way it has been allowed to persist. As I mentioned, over half of these platforms already have policies in place that would prohibit such activity but fail to enforce them. And those policies are not harmonized with each other – what is prohibited on one platform could be perfectly allowable on another. In fact, while most platforms have removed the Oath Keepers, payment facilitator RallyPay still to this day services the group's fundraising needs and has shown no sign of responding to public pressure to stop.⁶

⁶ <https://twitter.com/socialistdogmom/status/1362096551120748549>

More must be done. Industry-wide standards must be set, and enforcement across both the public and private sectors must be stepped up if we are to stem the growth of Domestic Violent Extremism. Chairman Himes, Ranking Member Hill and members of the committee, thank you again for your time this morning, I welcome your questions, and I look forward to discussing these issues in more detail with you all.

